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A TREATISE

ON

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

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A TREATISE

ON

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A TREATISE

ON

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

BY

PATON J. GLOAG
ASSISTANT MINISTER OF DUNNING
AUTHOR OF A TREATISE ON THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

"If the article of justification be once lost, then is all true Christian doctrine lost."—LUTHER

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MDCCCLVI

PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Treatise need say nothing as to the importance of the subject discussed in these pages. The different views taken of it constitute the great distinction between Romanism and Protestantism. Justification by faith is not only a doctrine, but the distinguishing doctrine of Protestantism,—the great characteristic feature in the creed of the Reformers. It appears to the author peculiarly necessary to insist upon this subject in the present day. Many who profess to be Protestants have lost sight of this great doctrine, and inculcate a system which differs in nothing from the Romish view of justification. There are some who have gone the length of asserting that this doctrine ought not to be publicly preached, but rather concealed from the people. Besides, the author fears that

there are also many who pervert it, by making it an excuse and a plea for ungodliness.

There are, it is admitted, no want of excellent works on this subject. These, the author has freely consulted. He would, in particular, mention Davenant's "Disputatio de Justitia," Bishop Barlow's "Letters on Justification," Dr. Owen "On Justification," and a work on the same subject by Dr. Bennet of London in answer to the lectures of Dr. Newman. These works, however, are mainly controversial, and the treatises of Davenant and Owen, in particular, are too elaborate and scholastic to be well fitted for the general reader. It has accordingly appeared to the author that there is room for a work on the subject of a more popular and practical kind. The author has repeatedly and carefully read the celebrated lectures of Dr. Newman, but, he must confess, with a feeling of disappointment. The reasoning appears to him defective, and the distinctions made either erroneous or unintelligible.

In the arrangement of the Treatise, the author has not, perhaps, adopted the most obvious order; this he found impossible to do, without taking for granted some things which

were afterwards to be proved. He has rather attempted a logical order, by which the proof of one proposition might lead to the establishment of another. He has endeavoured to be plain and practical, and has purposely abstained, as much as possible, from all controversial discussions in the body of the Treatise. He wishes the reader to feel that justification by faith is not a theoretical dogma, but a great practical inquiry; that it is not a mere arena where theologians may try their skill, but the life of the soul. The nature of the subject, however, and the opposite views which have been formed upon it by Protestants and Romanists, have not permitted him wholly to exclude controversy, as he desired. In order that the practical character of the work might be preserved, and yet that the subject might not on that account be defective, he has added an Appendix, reserved for questions purely controversial.

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JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

THE NECESSITY OF JUSTIFICATION.

In considering the doctrine of justification, a previous inquiry arises as to its *necessity*,— What is the nature of that state which renders justification necessary to man? The inquiry meets us at the very outset; it arises from the nature of the doctrine. Justification is the mode of man's acceptance with God, — the method by which he may obtain the pardon of his sins, be delivered from punishment, be restored to the divine favour, be accounted righteous, and receive a title to eternal life. Now this necessarily supposes that, previous to justification, man is exposed to the divine displeasure; that, as a sinner, he is condemned by the law, and liable to punishment. If this be not the case, there can be no neces-

sity for his justification, and all inquiry as to its nature is superfluous. And besides, if we do not believe and realise our state of condemnation under the law, we will make no serious and practical inquiry as to the method of our deliverance revealed in the Gospel.

The inquiry in itself is one of supreme importance. How will God deal with sinners? What will become of those who are found guilty? How can they escape the punishment of transgression? From God, it is evident, they cannot escape; they are completely in His hands, and He can dispose of them according to His pleasure. His power they cannot resist; from His presence there is no flight; of His justice there is no evasion; from His displeasure there is no defence.

Now, if such be our real state,—if we are transgressors of the law, and as such liable to punishment, it is of the greatest importance that we should be made thoroughly aware of our peril. If we think ourselves safe, we shall make no attempts to avoid that awful danger, to which, in reality, we are exposed; and thus our sense of safety will prove the cause of our destruction. It is indeed dis-

agreeable to be warned of our danger, to be awakened out of our delusive security, but to be so is essential to our salvation. He who has swallowed some deadly poison, must be informed and alarmed in order that he may provide some powerful antidote. The knowledge of our danger will be displeasing to us, it will alarm and disturb us, and break in upon our happiness: but by alarming, it may induce us to avoid it; by disturbing, it may excite us to betake ourselves to the remedy; and by breaking in upon our false peace, it may lead us to the true peace of the Gospel. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

In this chapter, then, we propose to consider that state or condition which renders justification necessary to man. Now, justification, as revealed in Scripture, would be unnecessary if man were already in a state of favour with God, and so required no justification; or if, allowing him to have fallen into a state of condemnation, he could of his own strength restore himself to the divine favour, and so a revealed method of justification would be unnecessary. We have, then, to prove the

opposite of these two suppositions; and shall therefore endeavour to demonstrate, *First*,—That man by nature is not in a state of favour with God, but of condemnation. And *Secondly*,—That man cannot, by his own ability, deliver himself from condemnation, and restore himself to the favour of God.

I.—MAN BY NATURE IS IN A STATE OF CONDEMNATION.

A state of condemnation is the opposite of a state of justification; and by the assertion that man by nature is in a state of condemnation, we mean that man has transgressed the law of God, and that by this law he is condemned. It supposes a liability to punishment. Punishment is the penalty which the law pronounces against transgression; and man, by transgression, has become obnoxious to that penalty. Now, that this is the natural state of man, will be clearly seen when we consider these three propositions,—that the law of God demands perfect obedience—that it pronounces a curse upon transgression, and in this consists its condemning power—and that we have all transgressed.

1. *The law of God demands perfect obedience.*—It is evident, beyond all question, that God has placed man under a law. Man is created a free agent; he has powers and faculties within him, which render him a capable subject of moral government. Hence, then, if it please God to govern man as a moral creature, this can only be done by the promulgation of a moral law; man must be acted upon by motives, and not by constraint or compulsion, else he ceases to be a free agent. Now God has given man a moral law. He has laid down a certain course which he ought to pursue—what actions to avoid, and what to perform. The requirements of this law are comprehended in these two commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Supreme love to God, and disinterested love to our neighbour, are the two great requisitions of the moral law. And this law is not merely revealed and unfolded, and explained in the Word of God, but it is also inscribed upon the human heart. In every man there is a conscience which

judges between right and wrong — a moral sense which determines the quality of our deeds—an instinctive feeling which condemns or approves our actions. The Gentiles, the apostle tells us, which have not the law, that is, not a written and revealed law, are a law unto themselves, and have the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience either acquitting or condemning them, according as they do that which is morally right or wrong. There exists, then, a law of God, both revealed in the Bible and written in the conscience, declaring the duty of man, and laying down, by way of prohibitions and positive commandments, what he ought to avoid, and what to perform.

Further, it must be borne in mind that the law of God is spiritual, that it extends to the thoughts of the heart as well as to the actions of the life. Man is a spiritual being: the body is but the instrument with which the soul works; the sins which are openly committed, already existed in a secret form in the mind, and therefore it is that the law is spiritual in its demands; it aspires to erect the throne of God in the human soul, and to

bring every thought and feeling into subjection to His divine authority. "The law," says the apostle, "is spiritual." It is the motive which determines the quality of the action in the sight of God; His eye pierces through all coverings; all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. We can only judge of the disposition of a man by the actions of his life; but God searches into the hidden spring and source of all our actions. It is not the doings merely but the being of a man that the law of God regards—not merely that the actions of a man be honest, but that he himself be honest—not merely that he should avoid all lies and deceits, but that he himself be truthful and sincere—not merely that he should worship God externally and express His praises with his lips, and render thanks to Him for his mercies, but that the love of God penetrate into his inmost soul, and diffuse itself over his whole being. And this is the only true morality, the only defence against outward sin. What advantage to cleanse the outside of the cup and platter, if the inside be full of extortion

and excess? It is not mere outward idolatry that the law forbids, the bowing the knee to some idol; but the inward idolatry of the heart, the preference of the creature to the Creator. He who hates his brother without a cause is a murderer. The unchaste look, and the impure desire, are adultery. The harbouring of sinful passions in the soul, the fostering of evil dispositions, are plain violations of that law which extends to the thoughts and feelings of the heart. And thus it is that the existence of evil feelings, and the want of good dispositions—the presence of pride, hatred, envy, and the absence of love, faith, humility, in a word a want of conformity of heart to God's law—are sins, moral evils, transgressions of the law of God.

Now, this law of God must demand perfect obedience. It were absurd to say that in any particular or degree, the law commands what it is not meant that man should obey. And this perfection of obedience must be a perfection in parts, in principle, in degree, and in continuance.—The obedience which the law demands must be perfect *in its parts:* we must obey all the commands of

God without exception or limitation; if we offend in one particular, the law is broken and we become transgressors; "if," says St. James, "ye commit sin, ye are convinced of the law as transgressors; for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." *—It must also be perfect *in principle:* we must obey from a pure heart; our actions must be the effects of a holy disposition; the motives which govern our conduct must be righteous; the law is spiritual, and therefore its demands are spiritual.—It must be perfect *in degree:* we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind; we must devote all our powers with supreme affection to the service of God; nothing must come into competition with His interests; for this, and nothing less than this, is the command and requirement of the law.—And it must be perfect *in its continuance:* the law of God is always binding; its authority over us cannot be relaxed; at no time and under no circumstances can we be free from its commands.

* James ii. 9, 10.

Unless, then, we yield this moral and spiritual law a minute and perfect obedience, we are constituted transgressors, and cannot appeal to it for a demonstration of our innocence, or for our justification. It has, indeed, been often argued that if we render the law a sincere, though imperfect obedience, we do all that is required of us, and fulfil its demands. But it is perfect obedience which the law demands; and, therefore, he whose obedience is imperfect is a transgressor; he who has been guilty of sin, by this very circumstance has broken the law. And this arises from the nature of law. Every law demands perfect obedience to its enactments, and he who does not render such obedience has in no sense fulfilled, but has broken the law. And further, if once the law of God is disobeyed, no future obedience, however perfect, can alter the fact, and make the man cease to be a transgressor. Perfect obedience for the future is no more than the law requires, and, therefore, can prove no equivalent for past transgression; just as we do not diminish a debt one fraction merely by being careful for the time to come not to increase it.

The condition, then, of justification under the law is perfect obedience. If we obey the law perfectly, we satisfy its requirements, and can appeal to it for justification; if we disobey, we are convicted by the law as transgressors. The reward is promised only to those who continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them; these it justifies, but those who disobey it condemns. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them." * "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."† This is essential to the very nature of law, and is true of every law. A law may promise rewards to those who obey, but it certainly denounces punishment against those who disobey. It would destroy itself were it delivered in these terms: You are commanded to obey, but you will be forgiven if you transgress. And hence when the self-righteous lawyer in the Gospel asked our Saviour: "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" On what terms,

* Rom. x. 5. † Rom. ii. 13.

or conditions, is eternal life bestowed? Our Lord replied: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,"—if thou wilt be saved by the law, fulfil its requirements.

2. *The law pronounces a curse upon transgression, and in this consists its condemning power.* There are penalties attached to the law of God. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."* This curse is pronounced upon all disobedience, even although it should be a single act: the law speaks in a universal language to all transgressors, and levels its terrors against all offences, great or small, without exception. And this is true of all laws, human as well as divine; every disobedience is tried and condemned. Every law must of necessity denounce some punishment upon those who disobey it; a law without a penalty ceases to be law, and becomes mere advice. It is only on account of the imperfection of human laws, that any crime escapes its merited punishment,—an imperfection which cannot possibly belong to the laws of God, who is at

* Gal. iii. 10.

once the infallible Witness, and the unerring Judge of all our actions. There is, then, an inseparable connexion between guilt and punishment. Guilt is the effect of the transgression of the law, and punishment is suffering occasioned by guilt, for mere suffering uncaused by guilt, is not punishment but affliction.

Punishment, then, is not the effect of the mere arbitrary will and appointment of God, but arises from the very nature of law. If there be a law, there must be penalties attached to it. And hence it is that the justice and truth of God are concerned in putting these penalties into execution. God is just, and His justice requires that He should render to every man according to his works. God is true, and His truth requires that His threatenings as well as His promises should be fulfilled. God being the moral Ruler and Governor of His intelligent creatures, the punishment due to the transgression of His law is the necessary effect of the divine righteousness, justice and truth. "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent: hath He

said and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

And hence, also, when we speak of the wrath of God, it is not to be understood that we intend thereby anything in the least degree similar to revenge and rage in us. Such disorderly feelings are infinitely removed from God. "Fury is not in Him." But by the wrath of God we mean the righteous sentence of the Lawgiver — that attribute of justice which must necessarily belong to the supreme Judge and moral Ruler of the universe—the infliction of that punishment which is pronounced against the transgressors of His law.

The law, then, pronounces a curse upon transgression; this is the penalty which is attached to it. The man who transgresses the law, from that moment is under the curse; he is guilty and merits punishment. Now this curse, this penalty of the law, is in Scripture called by the generic name of *death*. "In the day thou eatest thereof," said God to Adam, "thou shalt surely die."* "The soul that sinneth it shall die."† "The

* Gen. ii. 17. † Ezek. xviii. 4.

wages of sin is death." * But although the penalty is expressed by this one term, yet we must not suppose that there shall be no difference in the punishment of different kinds of transgressors. As there is a great difference among men in point of guilt, so there will be as great a difference in their punishment; but still, whoever has broken the law, has by this act become obnoxious to its penalty of death, he has incurred the displeasure of the Lawgiver, and is condemned by the law.

But what is the nature of this death, which the Word of God declares to be the punishment of transgression? What is intended by this term? It is not the mere death of the body: that may be a part of the sentence, but it cannot be the whole. Death is the fate of all men; but believers in Christ, we are told, are delivered from the penalty of transgression, —from that death which the law attaches to disobedience. There must, then, be something more included in the term than mere temporal death. Now we are expressly and repeatedly informed in Scripture, that there is another world beyond the grave, and that in that world

* Rom. vi. 23.

there are sufferings awaiting the wicked. The next life is a state of retribution: it is then that the sentence of the law will be fully executed; it is then that its penalties will be inflicted upon transgressors: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;" *—"They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." † And Christ shall say to those on His left hand: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." ‡ This is that death which the law pronounces as the punishment of transgression,—those future sufferings which await the wicked in another world.

3. And now, to complete our proof, we have only to add, that *all men have transgressed.* If the law demands perfect obedience,—if it pronounces a curse upon transgression,—then it is evident that, if all men have transgressed, all are under the curse. Now this is a melancholy fact which we require no arguments to prove. If the obedience which the law demands be absolutely perfect, there is surely not a single

* Psalm ix. 17. † 2 Thess. i. 9. ‡ Matt. xxv. 41.

human being who will venture to affirm that he is free from sin. "There is not," says the Word of God, "a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not;" *—"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"† —"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." ‡ And experience too plainly corroborates these statements of revelation. All, then, have transgressed, and therefore all have come under the curse which the law pronounces upon transgression: "The law," says the apostle, "worketh wrath;" §—"By the law is the knowledge of sin;" ‖ it brings the whole world under a sentence of condemnation; the curse is levelled against all without exception; and unless we are redeemed from that curse, all must suffer the punishment of transgression.

Most men readily acknowledge that they are sinners,—that they have broken the law of

* Eccles. vii. 20. † Rom. iii. 23. ‡ Rom. iii. 10–12.
§ Rom. iv. 15. ‖ Rom. iii. 20.

God. This is a truth which they feel that they cannot possibly deny. They have not loved God as they ought; they have been frequently guilty of pride, of hatred, and of envy; they have often forgotten to acknowledge God as their Creator and Preserver; they have omitted such duties as the law of God commanded, and they have done those actions which it prohibited. These are facts which cannot be denied; and the more you search into your character and conduct, the more will you discern the number and greatness of your sins. But still there are comparatively few who actually feel that they are sinners, who realise in all its momentous consequences what it is to be a sinner,—to be condemned by the law, to be subject to its curse, to be exposed to its penalty. There is all the difference in the world between a bare confession of our sinfulness and the heartfelt experience of sin. Think whose laws you have broken, whose authority you have despised, whose justice you have incensed. Think on the abyss of ruin into which you have plunged yourselves,—on the awful nature of that punishment which, if the sentence of condemnation

be not reversed, will be inflicted on you. Think on the innumerable sins you have committed, and on the vast amount of wrath which is treasured up against you. "God is not a man that we should answer Him, and that we should come together in judgment."

The great error of most men, the great cause of their insensibility, consists in this, that they entertain very inadequate notions of God, of sin, and of the law,—by reason of which they do not see the evil of sin, the intention of punishment, or the inevitable nature of that danger to which they are exposed. In general, the justice of God, and His character as a lawgiver, and the nature of sin as the transgression of the law, are kept out of view. If we consider sin merely as an insult to God, and the divine wrath as somewhat similar to passion in us, we degrade the Supreme Being, and accuse Him of vindictive rage in punishing sin. Again, if we view sin as entirely similar to a debt, and consider God as the creditor, and forgiveness as the remission of that debt, we can see no reason why the goodness of God should not cause Him freely to forgive us our sins without any satisfaction being made. And

further, if sin be considered merely as an inherent quality which renders us displeasing in the sight of a holy God, and disqualifies us for the enjoyment of His presence, then no atonement would be necessary, forgiveness would be extended to men simply on their repentance, and all that would be requisite is, that the Holy Spirit sanctify our natures. Now in all these views there is partial truth, but there is not the whole truth; the idea of law is entirely overlooked in each of them. God is the Sovereign of the universe, and sin is an insult to His majesty: He is our Creator, and sin is a debt which we have contracted: He is a holy God, and sin is displeasing to His nature; but more and above all these, He is the righteous Governor of the universe, and sin is the transgression of His law: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."* God's law, like all good and holy laws, is established for the good of the subjects at large; the happiness of the whole universe depends upon its being observed; every sin which is committed is the introduction of evil; and, therefore, punish-

* 1 John iii. 4.

ment is necessary for the maintenance of the authority of the law, and for the happiness of the intelligent creation. And although we cannot tell the evil effects which the sins of men may have upon other orders of being, yet it is highly probable that such evil effects would occur, were sin unpunished;—at least we find that in this world, the natural tendency of sin is to produce evil and misery. Sin, then, is a great evil: it is an insult to God's majesty; it is depriving Him of that which is His due; it is directly opposed to His holiness; but, above all things, it is a transgression of the law, and as such merits punishment. "It is not," says a learned divine, "that the wickedness of men can hurt Him, that His throne is in any danger of being shaken by their combinations, or that His treasures may be exhausted if His subjects do not pay what they owe Him; it is not from any such emotion as personal injury excites in our breast; but it is because His laws are founded on the essential difference between good and evil; because they are adapted with wisdom and goodness to the circumstances of those to whom they are given, and because the happiness of the whole rational

creation depends upon the observance of them, that guilt, under the divine government, is followed by punishment." *

II.—MAN'S INABILITY TO DELIVER HIMSELF FROM CONDEMNATION.

We have proved that all men, having transgressed the law, are by nature in a state of condemnation, and that none can be justified by the law on the ground of his own perfect obedience. We have next to inquire if there is any method, either by doing or by suffering, by which man can free himself from condemnation; for if there be, then a revealed method of justification would be unnecessary. Now the only supposable methods are—that the sinner should do something more than the law requires, and so make satisfaction for his sins, —or that by his sufferings he should expiate his guilt,—or that God should accept his repentance in lieu of his obedience. Let us, then, examine whether, by any of these methods, the sinner can free himself from condemnation.

* See Hill's *Lectures on Divinity*, 2d edition, vol. ii., pp. 396-401; also Appendix, Note A.

The first method is by personal merit,—that the sinner do something more than the law requires, and thus render satisfaction for his sins. This was the method which the heathen usually attempted, but of the success of which they were extremely doubtful. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" But it is evident that this method is altogether vain, from this simple consideration, that no man can possibly do more than the law requires. The law requires perfect and continued obedience; it demands that we love God with all our heart. Higher obedience we cannot give; higher love we cannot have; and there is no time when such obedience and love are not our duty. If our supposed meritorious actions be agreeable to the will of God, they are already required by the law; if they be not agreeable, they are sinful, and as such merit punishment and not reward. Besides,

it is evident that we cannot give anything to God by way of satisfaction for our sins; we cannot constitute Him a debtor to us: He already possesses all things; He is the sovereign Proprietor of heaven and of earth. Creature merit, then, is, from the nature of the case, an impossibility. "Can a man," says Eliphaz, "be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? Will He reprove thee for fear of thee? will He enter with thee into judgment? Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?" * You may surpass all others in works of righteousness; you may spend all your days in holy reading and in prayer; you may give your whole fortune in alms to the poor; you may be continually visiting the sick and the dying; your labours in the cause of religion may exceed those of St. Paul, and your zeal rival that of the martyrs; yet, if you think thereby to atone for your sins, to merit the favour of God, you labour under a miserable delusion.

* Job xxii. 2–5.

The second method of deliverance is that of suffering,—that the sinner by his sufferings in this life atone for his guilt, and thus escape future punishment. Now the law does certainly condemn to suffering,—for punishment is suffering occasioned by guilt,—and he who suffers the penalty satisfies the law. But then it is eternal suffering that the law demands; the sentence which it pronounces is death. "Their worm dieth not," says the Saviour, "and the fire is not quenched." If, then, such be the penalty of the law, how can the sorrows of a few days satisfy it? how can they prove an equivalent to the pains of hell? And, besides, the same argument which we applied to the idea of merit applies here; if these supposed expiatory sufferings be agreeable to the will of God, they are already required by the law; if they be not agreeable, they are sins. And, indeed, such voluntary sufferings cannot be pleasing to God; they are not sanctioned either by the law or by the Gospel; there is no declaration from God that He will accept them instead of the punishment which the law requires; and, therefore, they can have no beneficial effect in expiating guilt. No pen-

ances that we can perform, no sacrifices that we can make, no sufferings that we can endure, can atone for our sins. You may from this moment bid an eternal farewell to the pleasures of the world, and make your abode in the desert; you may torture your body with fasting and scourging; you may expose yourself to the extremities of cold and heat, and weary yourself with constant vigils; you may surpass all men in the rigour of your life and the severity of your penances; yet all would be in vain: such sufferings could not be pleasing to God; His law could not in the slightest degree be magnified by such conduct; no atonement would be made for a single sin; the curse of a broken law would still hang over your devoted head; nay, you would not thereby satisfy even your own conscience; the sentence of the law would still be sounding in your ears, and continually driving you to fresh severities:—"The soul that sinneth it shall die."

The third method is that of repentance,—that God should accept the sinner's repentance in lieu of his obedience. This method is much insisted upon by those who will not assent to

the Gospel method of deliverance by an atonement. God, they say, is a very merciful God; if they do their best, He will accept them; if they repent, He will forgive them; if they are sincere, He will save them. And, doubtless, this is far more pleasing to God than either of the two other expedients — either than that of endeavouring to do more than the law requires, or than that of enduring voluntary sufferings. But there are many considerations which prove that it cannot free the sinner from condemnation.

1. There is no countenance given to such a scheme in Scripture. There are, indeed, many calls to repentance, and we are frequently told that except we repent we shall perish. But we are never told that repentance alone, independently of the merits of Christ, will justify and save us; there is not one passage in the whole of the Word of God, which declares that repentance is the meritorious cause of our forgiveness. On the contrary, St. Paul expressly asserts: "if there had been a law given which could have given life, righteousness should have been by the law;"*

* Gal. iii. 21.

thus asserting, by implication, that no such law exists.

2. Such an opinion is contrary to all our notions of law. The law, from its very nature, can hold forth no hopes of mercy. In the courts of human justice, repentance does not atone for guilt; however criminals are affected, justice takes its natural course, and the offender is punished. We allow that it may be pleaded among men as a reason for clemency, but it cannot be proposed as the ground of pardon, or a proof that the criminal does not deserve punishment.

3. The analogy of God's natural government teaches us, that there is no reason to conclude that repentance by itself alone will be effectual to remove the consequences of guilt. Many ruin themselves by extravagance, injure their health by dissipation, and destroy their character by acts of dishonesty. Now, even although they should bitterly repent of their crimes, and reform their conduct, yet it by no means follows, as a general rule, that they are delivered from the evil consequences which they have brought upon themselves. On the contrary, their health is often so under-

mined that they cannot recover it, and their characters so blasted that they cannot re-establish them; and thus their repentance does not restore them to that position which they occupied before they transgressed.

4. Our ignorance of God's moral government prevents us determining what are the effects of repentance. God is the righteous Governor of the universe, and sin is the transgression of His law; it is evident, then, that this being the case, it is utterly impossible for us, in the absence of a revelation, to assert what beneficial effects repentance will have upon the sinner, or whether it will have any; the happiness of the universe is here concerned, and it is very conceivable, and indeed probable, if we may reason from analogy, that other creatures might be tempted to disobedience, if sinners were forgiven merely on their repentance, without any satisfaction being made to the law; and therefore the goodness of God, as well as His justice, for all that we know, may be concerned in the punishment of transgression.

5. Repentance is evidently destitute of all merit, by reason of its imperfection. However

sincere and deep the repentance may be—however great the reformation consequent upon it, yet it is always imperfect—it is always followed by new sins, fresh breaches of the law of God. Its imperfection, then, destroys its efficacy, if ever it possessed any, and thus renders it utterly insufficient to atone for guilt. Even although our future obedience were perfect, it had been nothing more than our duty; but, as it will necessarily be imperfect, it becomes our sin.

It is evident, from all that we have considered, that none of these methods, nor all of them together, is sufficient to deliver us from condemnation. The law condemns us, and by nothing that we can do or suffer can we deliver ourselves from its penalty. Man, then, is entirely helpless—in a lost and ruined state.

If we attend to the declarations of Scripture, we shall find that it is declared in the plainest terms, that man is in a state of condemnation under the law, and that he cannot, of his own strength, restore himself to the divine favour. For example, it is asserted that he is condemned by the law: "Now we know that what things the law saith, it saith to them who

are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."* "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."† "The law worketh wrath."‡ It is declared that no man can be justified, that is, freed from condemnation, by the law. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."§ Yea, the apostle goes the length of asserting that if men could merit a righteousness of their own the atonement would be unnecessary, and Christ would have died to no purpose. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."‖ "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."¶ Thus the apostle founds the necessity of the atonement of Christ on the fact, that all men are by nature in a state of condemnation, and that they cannot possibly have any righteousness of their own to procure the divine favour. And to this also may be referred all those numerous passages which

* Rom. iii. 19. † Gal. iii. 10. ‡ Rom. iv. 15.
§ Rom. iii. 20. ‖ Gal. iii. 21. ¶ Gal. ii. 21.

speak of the atonement of Christ as the only method of deliverance from the curse of the law. "God hath set forth His Son to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." † Thus, then, it is beyond question the doctrine of Scripture, that all men are by nature in a state of condemnation; that they are in a lost and ruined condition; that no works of their own can atone for guilt; and that they are wholly unable to save themselves.

It is of the utmost importance that we should have clear views of our condition under the law. If we do not understand this we cannot understand the Gospel; if our views of our danger are confused and erroneous, they will affect our views of the way of our deliverance. We are the subjects of the moral government of God, and are under a

* Rom. iii. 25, 26. † Gal. iii. 13.

law which promises life as the reward of obedience, and threatens death as the punishment of disobedience. Now, this law we have frequently violated, and, therefore, have come under the curse which it pronounces upon transgression. To the reward of obedience we can make no claim, whilst we are liable to the punishment of disobedience. In such a state as this it is evident there can be no salvation; to perfect beings, the law is a rule of life; but to apostate men, to sinners, it is a rule of death. "The commandment," says the apostle, "which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." * Thus, then, our natural state is a state of extreme danger; we are under the curse of a broken law, in a state of condemnation, and liable to punishment. Justification, then, must be looked for, not in the law, but in the Gospel; and we must depend not upon our own fancied merits, but upon the merits of the great Redeemer. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."

Such we believe to be the scriptural doctrine of our condition by nature; and the Gospel

* Rom. vii. 10.

is just a remedy for this our wretched condition. "Christ came to seek and to save them that are lost." There may be difficulties attending this doctrine, but, if it be on account of these difficulties denied, the Gospel becomes altogether unintelligible. If the disease does not exist, the remedy is unnecessary and uncalled for; and if men are already in a state of salvation, or can by their own natural ability save themselves, there is in the economy of redemption a useless expenditure of means and operations, altogether at variance with the analogy of God's procedure in His other works. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Man, then, being by nature in a state ot condemnation, and being unable of his own strength, either by doing or by suffering, to deliver himself from this state, the necessity of a revealed method of justification follows as an obvious consequence. Man is condemned, and if he be not justified, he must perish; man is under the curse of the law, and if his sins be not forgiven, if his guilt be not removed, that dreadful curse must fall upon him, the penalty of the law must be fulfilled in his

destruction. How necessary, then, is justification! Without it, man is as a criminal condemned to death by the law; but with this tremendous difference, that the law which condemns him is the law of God, and the death to which he is condemned is the death of the soul.

CHAPTER II.

IMPORTANCE AND NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION.

It was the memorable saying of Luther,—that "the doctrine of justification by faith is the article of a standing or falling church." * In his opinion, if a church holds this doctrine uncorrupted, and gives it a prominent place in its teaching, no matter however much it differs from other churches in minor points of faith, in its government or in its ceremonies, it is a true church of Christ; but if it denies, corrupts, or conceals it, no matter however orthodox it may be in other points, it has denied the faith and has become a false witness of the truth: in the one case, the church stands on a secure basis; in the other case, it totters on a false or defective foundation.

How far this statement of the illustrious reformer is in accordance with truth, may perhaps afterwards appear. Certain it is, as

* Articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ.

matter of history, that it was the preaching of justification by faith which was chiefly instrumental in effecting the reformation. The world had just then awoke from a state of religious and moral slumber. It was eminently an era of intellectual activity: a spirit of inquiry was abroad. Men became anxious about the safety of their souls, their minds were disturbed by a feeling of guilt, they dreaded their appearance before the tribunal of their Judge, and anxiously sought for some method to pacify their consciences. To allay these fears the church of Rome brought forward its masses, its penances, its works of supererogation; but to no expedient was more prominence given than to that of indulgences. The flagrant abuse of this false doctrine and the shameful extent to which it was carried, at length drew the vail from men's minds. They found themselves to have been miserably deceived where their highest interests were concerned; to have had their wounds only covered but not healed; to have been cheated both of their goods and of their souls. It was in these circumstances that the first reformers brought forth from obscurity

and published to the world the doctrine of justification by faith, as the only method of obtaining peace with God. This they opposed to the doctrine of indulgences and the various superstitions of Rome: this recommended itself to troubled consciences as the truth of God. And thus, chiefly by the fearless preaching of this doctrine, the Reformation was effected.

This result arose not merely from the circumstances of the times, but from the nature of the truth promulgated. Most of the Romish superstitions spring from perverted views of the doctrine of justification. They conceive that we are justified by our own inherent righteousness, and that this righteousness has to be wrought out by works of various kinds, and perfected by various processes. Hence arose works of supererogation, councils of perfection, indulgences, penances, prayers to the saints, masses, purgatory, and numerous other superstitious observances and notions, all of which are the fruits of this corrupt tree. By establishing, then, the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith, you lay the axe to the root of all these corruptions; you overthrow

the foundation on which this gigantic fabric of superstition is erected. Here is one broad distinction between the church of Rome and the churches of the Reformation; their views of justification are not only dissimilar but opposite; and this great doctrine pervades and modifies their respective systems, and causes them to diverge from each other. And we trust that we shall be able to demonstrate that justification by faith in Christ is not only the doctrine of the Reformers, or of Protestants in general, but the doctrine of the Bible. "That man is justified by faith," says Bishop Horsley, "without the works of the law, was the uniform doctrine of the first Reformers. It is a far more ancient doctrine: it was the doctrine of the whole college of apostles. It is more ancient still: it was the doctrine of the prophets. It is older than the prophets: it was the religion of the patriarchs."

The importance of the doctrine of justification will be farther evident, when we reflect that this doctrine is the key to the meaning of Scripture. Luther's remark is founded on truth:—"If the article of justification be once lost, then is all true Christian doctrine lost."

This is an essential part of the Christian system. The Gospel is not merely a republication of natural religion; it is chiefly the revelation of the method of man's salvation; it is the answer to the inquiry: "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?" How shall sinners approach God with acceptance? That man is a fallen creature condemned by the law is the great fact which the Gospel presupposes; that there is a way of salvation by which man may be restored to the favour of God is the great doctrine which the Gospel reveals; and hence, the greater part of revelation must have reference to the method of man's acceptance with God, and apart from this reference much must in a great measure be unintelligible; and, therefore, it is only by understanding the doctrine of justification, as declared in the Gospel, that we can understand the revelation which God has given us.

It is evident from this that our peculiar views of justification will influence and modify our views of the whole scriptural system; inasmuch as all the doctrines peculiar to the Gospel are in a great measure derived from it and depend upon it. According as we adopt

the Romish notion, that a man is justified on account of his own inherent righteousness, or the Protestant notion, that he is justified on account of the imputed righteousness of Christ, our views of Christianity will be materially different. Our ideas of God as the supreme lawgiver,—of sin as the transgression of the law,—of the nature and extent of human depravity,—of the efficacy and perfection of good works,—of the sufferings and righteousness of Christ, are all modified and altered by the views we take of this one doctrine. If we obtain right notions of this truth, we cannot go far wrong in any other doctrine; whereas, if our notions of it are confused or erroneous, we are in danger of adopting errors which may be ruinous to our souls. "Christ," says the apostle, "is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

The doctrine of justification explains the way of man's salvation,—the mode of the sinner's acceptance with God. This, as we have already remarked, is in fact the whole theory of the Gospel. The Scripture proceeds on the supposition that man is in a state of

alienation from God, condemned by the law, in a lost and ruined condition. How important, then, the inquiry: "How shall mortal man be just with God?" This, indeed, is the inquiry of all religions, and which they all profess to answer. The Gospel alone affords the true solution,—that man, condemned by the law, may be saved by the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. It brings the remedy home to us,—it declares that God may be just, and yet the justifier of sinners,—that the demands of the law may be fully satisfied, and yet the transgressor may be pardoned,—that there is a "righteousness without the law," on the ground of which we may be forgiven and accepted.

Above all, to the convinced sinner, the doctrine of justification must appear to be supremely important. When a man truly realises the fact that he is a sinner; when he brings home to himself the sentence of condemnation passed against the transgressors of the law—not only that all are sinners, but that he is a sinner—not only that all are condemned, but that he is condemned; and when he feels, in the inmost recesses of his

own soul, that he is utterly destitute of a righteousness wherewith to appear before God—that his own righteousness is "as filthy rags," that his good works are sins, that his repentance is ineffectual to atone for guilt; and when he thinks on the infinite importance of being saved, and the awful consequences of being lost, on the undying worm, and the unquenchable fire; and when thus, in the anguish of his soul, he exclaims, What must I do to be saved?—how delightful to him the news of a method of justification, and how concerned will he be to entertain right views of its nature! And, indeed, it is only the convinced sinner who can appreciate and fully understand the doctrine of justification. This is one of those things which must be spiritually discerned, it being the mode of the sinner's acceptance with God; the first step in the true knowledge of the doctrine is for a man to know and to feel that he is a sinner.

It is lamentable to think that many erroneous notions prevail in the world concerning this doctrine,—notions which we cannot but think, if acted upon, must be ruinous to those

who hold them. Such erroneous notions prevailed in the days of the apostles; and many of their epistles were written with a special view of correcting them; in particular, the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and the epistle of James, were written for that purpose. Nor are such errors less prevalent in the present day. The church of Rome appears to us to have adopted views in a great measure similar to those of the judaizing Christians against whom Paul wrote. A party, who call themselves Protestants, entertain sentiments on justification which differ but in name from the Romish view. There still exist those who pervert the doctrine, as did they to whom the epistle of James is addressed, and derive from it maxims of immorality and licentiousness. And there is a fourth party who explain away the doctrine of justification altogether, in order to bring it down to the limited comprehension of human reason. It is, then, as necessary in the present day to explain and defend the doctrine of justification by faith, as it was in the days of the apostles. As, however, we would abstain as carefully as possible from

all controversial discussions, we shall rather seek to establish what we conceive to be the true scriptural doctrine, than professedly refute the opinions of those who differ from us.

That there is only one mode of justification, our system and the nature of the case compel us to believe and affirm. Man, we hold, can only be justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and without this there is to fallen man no justification at all. All are condemned by the law, and God has revealed only one mode of justification. All other methods, then, imagined by men are not only erroneous, but may be positively destructive. Not that this leads us to condemn those who differ from us; for, on the one hand, their difference may not touch the main point; and, on the other hand, their practice may be different from their opinions; but we judge that an error in this doctrine is more pernicious than an error in almost any other doctrine, because it contains the essence of Christianity. "They," says Dr. Owen, speaking of those who hold the true Protestant doctrine, "do not think, or judge, that all those are excluded from salvation

who cannot apprehend, or do deny the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, as by them declared. But they judge that they are so, unto whom that righteousness is not really imputed; nor can they do otherwise, whilst they make it the foundation of all their own acceptation with God, and eternal salvation. These things greatly differ. To believe the doctrine of it, or not to believe it, as thus explained, is one thing; and to enjoy the thing, or not to enjoy it, is another. I no way doubt, but that many men do receive more grace from God, than they understand or will own; and have a greater efficacy of it in them, than they will believe. Men may be really saved by that grace which, doctrinally, they do deny; and they may be justified by the imputation of that righteousness which, in opinion, they deny to be imputed. For the faith of it is included in that general assent which they give unto the truth of the Gospel, and such an adherence unto Christ may ensue thereon, as that their mistake of the way whereby they are saved by Him, shall not defraud them of a real interest therein." And, he adds, "For my part, I

must say, that notwithstanding all the disputes that I see and read about justification, I do not believe but that the authors of them, (if they be not Socinians throughout, denying the whole merit and satisfaction of Christ,) do really trust unto the mediation of Christ, for the pardon of their sins, and acceptance with God, and not unto their own works or obedience. Nor will I believe the contrary, until they expressly declare it." *

The doctrine of justification by faith without works, has always encountered much opposition in the world. It was greatly opposed in the apostolic ages, by the converted Pharisees, who taught that the observance of the law of Moses, conjoined with faith in the Gospel, was essential to justification. It is opposed now, as being both unscriptural and unreasonable. And, indeed, we think that the reason of this opposition lies in human nature. Man is naturally self-righteous: he wishes to work out merit of his own; his pride causes him to refuse to give all the glory of his salvation to another; he would fain mix up his own works with Christ's righteousness, in order to have

* Owen on Justification, chapter vii.

wherewith to glory. And, until man is humbled under a sense of sin—until the pride of his depraved heart is mortified—he will not submit to the humiliating doctrines of grace. "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" is the natural language of the human heart; the idea of receiving eternal life as the reward of doing some good action is that which takes possession of his soul.

Having made these preliminary remarks as to the importance of justification, we shall consider, in the remainder of this chapter, its *nature;* and, in doing so, we shall dwell upon these two points, *First,* The meaning of the term: and, *Secondly,* What is implied in it.

I.—THE MEANING OF THE TERM JUSTIFICATION.

It is of importance to fix the true meaning of the term justification, as employed in Scripture, and especially as used in the writings of the apostle Paul; for it may happen, that men may use the same word, and yet be discoursing on things entirely distinct, as has frequently been the case in controversies concerning justification.

Justification, as employed in Scripture, both in the Old and in the New Testament, is a legal term, denoting the acquittal of the accused. It signifies, not to make just, but to declare just, to acquit, to pronounce righteous. To quote all the passages in which it is thus employed would be tedious; let a few examples suffice: In the law of Moses, God is represented as saying: "Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not; for I will not justify the wicked." * But if to justify meant to make just or righteous, it is evident that in this sense it is highly pleasing to God to justify or make holy the wicked. When, then, God says: "I will not justify the wicked," the meaning must be, I will not acquit or absolve the wicked. "If," says Job, "I justify myself," that is, if I should declare or profess myself to be righteous or innocent, "mine own mouth shall condemn me." † And the same is the meaning of the term in the New Testament: "All the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God," ‡—not certainly made God righteous in himself, but owned

* Exod. xxiii. 7. † Job ix. 20. ‡ Luke vii. 29.

and declared His righteousness. "Wisdom is justified of all her children,"*—not that the wisdom of God is made just or righteous, but that it is declared or openly manifested to be so, by all who embrace it. "Ye are they," says our Saviour, speaking of the Pharisees, "which justify yourselves before men,"—which does not mean that they really made themselves righteous, but that they professed themselves to be so, whereas, in reality, they were far otherwise; for it follows: "God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."† And St. Paul uses the term in the same judicial sense. For example, he says: "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."‡ The doers of the law are justified, that is, acquitted, or declared just, on the ground of their own personal obedience. And again: "By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."§ Here the two methods of justification are con-

* Luke vii. 35.
† Luke xvi. 15.
‡ Rom. ii. 13.
§ Acts xiii. 39.

trasted,—justification by the law, and justification by faith in Christ: he who cannot be declared righteous by the law, is declared righteous by believing in Christ. Indeed, so evident is this meaning of the term, and so constantly is it thus employed in Scripture, that one of the great opponents of our doctrine, ingenuously confesses: "But one passage can be produced where it is used for 'making righteous,' and there the reading is doubtful."*

This meaning of the term will appear evidently to be the correct one, when we consider that it is by the sacred writers opposed to condemnation. This is done both in the Old and in the New Testament. Thus, in the judicial law of Moses we read: "If there be a controversy between men, and they come into judgment that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked."† So also in the book of Proverbs: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord."‡ And Solomon, at the dedication of

* Newman on Justification, page 75.

† Deut. xxv. 1. ‡ Prov. xvii. 15.

the temple, prays that God "would judge his servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness."* "By thy words," says our Saviour, "thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."† And it is evident from several parts of the epistle to the Romans, that St. Paul uses the term as the opposite of condemnation. "The judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."‡ "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?"§ These two terms, then, *condemnation* and *justification* are contrasted: they are opposites,—to justify is not to condemn, and to condemn is not to justify. But to condemn is not to *make*, but to *declare* guilty; it does not make him who was before

* 1 Kings viii. 32.
† Matt. xii. 37.
‡ Rom. v. 16, 18.
§ Rom. viii. 33.

righteous inherently wicked; but passes sentence upon him on account of his wickedness, real or supposed. If previously righteous, he still continues to be so; if wicked, his condemnation does not increase, but declares his wickedness. And hence justification, also, is not a *making*, but a *declaring* righteous; not a *change of character*, but a *change of condition with respect to the law*.

We must, however, take into consideration the fact, that the man who is justified by faith in Christ is a sinner, and in this lies the distinction between legal and evangelical justification. We do not here introduce any other meaning of the term, but an inquiry into the reason or ground on which a man is justified. Legal justification is on the ground of personal righteousness; evangelical justification is on the ground of imputed righteousness; and in both there is a declaration of righteousness. Supposing a man to have obeyed the law perfectly, he would be justified by reason of his perfect obedience. On this ground, angels and unfallen beings are justified. But man, it is evident, cannot be thus justified, because he is a sinner. If, then, man be justified,

that is, declared righteous, it must be on account of a righteousness imputed or reckoned to be his; and this is the Gospel method of justification. Christ, as the sinner's substitute, has wrought out a perfect righteousness for him; this righteousness is imputed unto him by faith; and on the ground of this imputed righteousness he is justified. Thus the sinner is not declared righteous when destitute of righteousness, but because he is possessed of a true and perfect righteousness. It is only a perfect righteousness that will justify any before God, and such a righteousness is imputed to all who believe on Christ.

Justification, then, is a forensic term. It supposes a judicial process. The sinner stands at the bar of God. He is accused of having broken the law. He is guilty, and has no plea of his own to offer. A mode of justification is revealed in the Gospel; the Lord Jesus Christ is declared, as the sinner's substitute, to have satisfied the demands of the law, to have suffered its penalty, and obeyed its requirements. To this the sinner betakes himself, as his only plea; this he lays hold on by faith, and for the sake of this he is justified,

—pardoned and accepted. Justification, then, is the act of God, the Judge of the world. "It is God that justifieth." "He is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." He it is who declares that the law is satisfied, and the sinner justified. But the sentence of a judge does not make a person righteous, but declares him to be so; it does not alter the character, but the condition of the person at the bar; formerly he was accused, now he is acquitted.*

II.—WHAT IS IMPLIED IN JUSTIFICATION.

We have proved that the meaning of the term justification, as used in Scripture, is a declaration of righteousness; and we have now to inquire what is implied in the scriptural notion of justification. And, indeed, it cannot be better defined than in the words of the Assembly's Catechism: "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." It is defined in similar language by

* Appendix, Note B.

Calvin: "Justification is the acceptance with which God receives us into His favour, as it we were righteous; and this justification consists in the forgiveness of sins, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ."* There are, then, two parts of justification,—pardon and acceptance—the pardoning of the sins of the sinner, and the accepting of his person as righteous—freedom from guilt and admission into the divine favour.

The first part of justification is *pardon*. Man, by reason of his sins, is in a state of condemnation; he is under the curse of the law; he is guilty, and, as such, exposed to wrath and amenable to punishment. All men sin to utter ruin; on the ground of their own righteousness can no flesh be justified. Hence, then, the first step in the justification of the sinner, is that the curse of the broken law be removed; that the sentence of condemnation passed upon him be reversed; that his sins be forgiven him. As long as he is unpardoned, he is in a state of condemnation. Now the Scriptures teach us that the Lord

* *Calvin's Institutes*, vol. ii. p. 303: Calvin Translation Society.

Jesus Christ came into this world, and offered up himself as a sacrifice for our sins; that He suffered the punishment of them, in His own person; and that He made a full and complete atonement for iniquity. It is by reason of this sacrifice of Christ that sinners are pardoned; forgiveness is obtained through the blood of the cross. "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." When, then, the sinner is justified, his sins are forgiven him, his debt is cancelled: "the handwriting of ordinances, which was against him, is blotted out;" and he passes from a state of condemnation to a state of legal pardon.

The second part of justification is *the acceptance of our persons as righteous.* A state of condemnation supposes a forfeiture of the reward of obedience, as well as a liability to the punishment of disobedience; and we, by our sins, have forfeited all claim to the favour

of God; we are in a state of alienation from God. Now Christ has not only, by His atoning death, satisfied the penalty of the law, by reason of which we may be pardoned, but by His meritorious obedience He has procured for us a perfect righteousness, by reason of which we may be accepted as righteous. It is solely on the ground of the imputation of this righteousness that any sinner is justified before God; by reason whereof God declares him righteous, receives him into His favour, and accounts him worthy of eternal life. "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." *—"God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." † When the sinner is justified, he is restored to the favour of God; he is admitted into His family; he receives a title to eternal life, and shall at length enter heaven by reason of his

* Rom. v. 18, 19. † 2 Cor. v. 21.

justification. Formerly, he was in a state of alienation, but now, being justified by faith, he obtains peace with God.

Justification, then, includes both *pardon and acceptance:* the one places man in the same position as if he had never sinned; the other as if he had actually fulfilled the law, and had so become entitled to the reward of obedience. Both of these benefits are mentioned together in several parts of Scripture. As, for example, St. Paul says, that Christ sent him to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified." * And our Saviour says: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." † This distinction has been illustrated by the vision of Zechariah concerning Joshua the high priest. The sinner by nature is represented by Joshua, who stood before the angel clothed in filthy garments; his pardon, by these filthy garments being taken from

* Acts xxvi. 17, 18. † John v. 24.

him; and his acceptance as righteous, by his being clothed with a change of raiment. "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee: and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." *

There is no transaction in the courts of human justice which exactly resembles justification; and for this reason, that human laws do not admit of substitution, or the imputation of another's merits, in the case of crime. In order, then, to illustrate the doctrine, we must compare it both with an acquittal on the ground of innocence, and with a pardon after conviction of guilt. It resembles an acquittal, inasmuch as the justified man is restored to the station which he would always have occupied had he not been accused; and it resembles a pardon, inasmuch as his crimes are forgiven him. It differs from an acquittal, because the justified man, when accused, is convicted of guilt; and it differs from a pardon, because he is restored to the divine favour as if he had been innocent. A man who is accused and found innocent is reinstated in his position in society; but the man who is found guilty and

* Zech. iii. 1-5.

pardoned can never occupy his former station; there is a stain in his character which can never be obliterated. But the stain in the character of the justified is obliterated: those whom God pardons He also accepts as righteous, and receives into communion with himself.

From all that has been said, it will be seen that the grand and immediate effect of justification is a *change of condition.* The sinner is brought into a new relation with God. Formerly he was exposed to His wrath; now he is restored to His favour. Formerly he was regarded as guilty, and as such liable to punishment; now he is looked upon as a child of God, and as an heir of heaven. He who was formerly a stranger and a foreigner, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise, has now become a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.* "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." † There is also a change in the character of believers as well as in their condition; they are not merely restored to

* Eph. ii. 12, 19. † Rom. viii. 1.

the favour of God, but also to His image; they are delivered not only from the guilt, but also from the power of their sins; a principle of inherent holiness is implanted within them. Whom God justifies, them He also sanctifies. The relation and inseparable connection between these two,—between that imputed righteousness which effects a change upon our condition, and that inherent righteousness which produces a change upon our character,—we intend afterwards fully to explain.

Nor let it be said that the change thus effected by justification is merely nominal. Those who say so have very inadequate views of the state of condemnation under the law. Justification places a man on an entirely different footing with God. It transforms his whole spiritual condition: from being a child of wrath, it makes him a child of God. It is not a temporary, but a great final change which shall never be reversed. His sins are pardoned; he shall never come into condemnation; he is saved from hell; he is restored to the favour of God; he is treated as a child; he receives a title to eternal life; he can entertain the hopes of glory, and can look forward with

joy to the end of his course; he is animated in his Christian life by the sure prospects of a happy termination; in affliction he can discern the hand of a Father; and although he feels far from being perfect, yet even his imperfections, if they do not render the reality of his faith uncertain, need not shake his confidence, for he possesses a righteousness perfect and complete, in which he shall be found at the last day, and clothed with which he shall enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." *

Such is the nature of justification. How great the benefit! How important the blessings it implies! Let us see to it that we not merely endeavour to understand this doctrine, but receive it into our hearts. It is not a mere theoretical dogma; it is a great practical truth: we ourselves must be justified, else we cannot possibly be saved. How important, then, is it clearly to understand the method of our justifi-

* Rom. v. 1 2.

cation,—on what ground the sinner is justified, and what is required on our part to enjoy the benefit,—lest we should deceive ourselves, like those Jews of old, who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God."

CHAPTER III.

IMPUTATION OF CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In our last chapter we considered the nature of justification, and endeavoured to show that justification is a declaration of righteousness by God the supreme Judge of the world, whereby our sins are pardoned and our persons accepted as righteous in His sight. The next inquiry which naturally suggests itself is: On what ground does God justify the sinner?—in other words, What is that righteousness, on account of which God declares us righteous? This inquiry we have already partially answered in our former chapter, but we now enter upon a more minute consideration of it.

There are two opposite views of this subject. The Romanists, in general, hold that we are justified on the ground of our own inherent righteousness. Protestants, on the contrary, in general affirm that we are justi-

fied on the ground of the imputed righteousness of Christ; that His merits are reckoned to us, and that, for the sake of them, we are accounted righteous. This is the uniform doctrine of the churches of the Reformation. Thus the eleventh article of the Church of England declares: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings." And the same doctrine is still more expressly asserted in the Westminster Confession: "Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith." * The righteousness of Christ, then, including under

* Confession of Faith, xi. 1.

this term, both His meritorious obedience and His satisfaction for sin, imputed to us or reckoned ours, is that righteousness on the ground of which we are justified. Or, as it is laid down by Dr. Owen: "The righteousness of Christ, in His obedience and suffering for us, imputed unto believers, as they are united unto Him by His Spirit, is that righteousness whereon they are justified before God, on the account whereof their sins are pardoned, and a right is granted them unto the heavenly inheritance." * And this is what is meant in controversial writings, by the formal cause of justification, that namely by which we are not only accounted justified, but really made or constituted so; and this we affirm to be the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.

In this chapter, then, we propose to consider the imputation of Christ's righteousness, as being the ground of our justification. The subject is one of great extent, and embraces other doctrines which we shall only explain so far as they are connected with it. There are two points which we must here take up:

* Owen on Justification, p. 202: Tegg & Co.

we must first explain our doctrine, and then show its conformity with Scripture. *First*, The nature of the imputation of Christ's righteousness; *Secondly*, The reality of this imputation.

I.—THE NATURE OF THE IMPUTATION OF CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In the statement of the doctrine, there are several things which require explanation in order to its full comprehension. What is meant by imputation? What by Christ's righteousness? And what by these two considered conjointly, the imputation of Christ's righteousness?

The same word, which in Scripture is in some places translated imputed, is in other places rendered reckoned, accounted, laid to one's charge, put to one's account; all these signifying nearly the same thing. To impute is to reckon, or to account; and, therefore, to impute good or evil unto one is to reckon it to him, or to put it to his account,—to judge, or esteem that he possesses it, and to deal with him accordingly. The word is used with reference both to what was originally

ours, and to what was not formerly ours, but only became ours by virtue of such imputation. Thus Shimei beseeches David not to impute iniquity unto him, nor to remember what he did perversely against him.* He acknowledges his guilt—that it was his own, only he deprecates its imputation,—he entreats that it may not be laid to his charge, and that he may not be punished on account of it. So, also, we have an example of God's imputing righteousness to one, who before such imputation possessed it. "Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment, and that was counted unto him for righteousness;" † that is, God acknowledged the good action of His servant, as being a righteous action, and marked it with His approval. In both these cases, the term signifies dealing with men according to their personal character and real deserts. But the word is also applied to what is not ours antecedently to the imputation; and this is its meaning in all cases of substitution or suretiship, or when men are dealt with not on account of their own merits or demerits, but on account

* 2 Sam. xix. 19. † Psal. cvi. 30, 31.

of the merits or demerits of others. As, for example, Paul thus writes to Philemon, on behalf of Onesimus: "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account," or, more literally, "impute it to me." He requests Philemon to charge him with the injury and loss he had sustained from Onesimus—to account it as his, and to require satisfaction from him. "I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it."* So, in like manner, a debt is imputed to a surety, and the surety's payment to the debtor; and the virtues and vices of men are often imputed to their children.†

When the term is applied to Christ's righteousness, it is evidently used in the sense of imputing to us what was not originally ours. There is here a reckoning or accounting to us of the thing imputed. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us; that is, it is reckoned to us, and accounted as our righteousness before God. And there is a corresponding dealing with us, according to what is imputed. God seeing us possessed of the perfect righteousness of His Son, pardons our

* Phil. 18, 19. † Owen on Justification, pp. 159-166.

sins, and accepts our persons as righteous; He deals with us as if we had never sinned, and had perfectly fulfilled the law. Not that we mean by this that the sinner is, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, made inherently righteous. Both righteousness and sin are personal, and cannot in this sense be bestowed upon another; a man cannot be made inherently righteous by the imputation of another's righteousness, nor inherently sinful by the imputation of another's sinfulness. But what we mean is, that God imputes, that is, reckons or accounts, the righteousness of Christ to us, puts it to our account, so that we receive all the benefits which arise from that righteousness. In the words of Dr. Owen: "This imputation is an act of God, of His mere love and grace, whereby, on the consideration of the mediation of Christ, He makes an effectual grant and donation of a true, real, and perfect righteousness, even that of Christ himself, unto all that do believe, and, accounting it as theirs, on His own gracious act, both absolves them from sin, and granteth them right and title unto eternal life." In a similar manner as a debt which a surety has paid

is not imputed to the debtor, so Christ, as our Surety, by the gracious provision of God, has paid our debts, and by reason of this we receive the full remission of our sins: God judges not that we ourselves have paid the debt, but that Christ has done so for us, and on the ground of this we are dealt with as if we ourselves had actually done so.

By the righteousness of Christ which is imputed, is here meant all the merits of His life and death,—all that honour which He rendered to the law, both by enduring its penalty and by obeying its requirements. The law demands to be obeyed, and, if broken, to be satisfied. Now Christ, as the sinner's substitute, fulfilled the law in both respects; He rendered a perfect obedience to its commands, and made a full satisfaction for its transgression; and in both ways, by His obedience and satisfaction, He wrought out a perfect righteousness for us. "He finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness." It is true that the word *righteousness*, considered simply in itself, is ambiguous, and would seem to refer primar-

ily to obedience rendered to the law; for the law does not oblige to suffering except where it is transgressed: but it must here be taken into account whose substitute Christ was,—he was the substitute of those who transgressed the law, and from them the law required both obedience to its enactments and satisfaction for past guilt.*

The Scriptures, speaking of that righteousness whereby we are justified, often call it the *righteousness of God.* "But now," says St. Paul, "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." † "To them," says St. Peter, "that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." ‡ Now this cannot mean the divine attribute of righteousness,—that perfect rectitude of character which leads God always to do what is right and proper. The apostle speaks of it as the righteousness of faith,—that method of

* Appendix, Note C.

† Rom. iii. 21, 22.

‡ 2 Peter i. 1.

righteousness which is revealed in the Gospel; he opposes it to the righteousness of the law, —to that righteousness which arises from the performance of good works; and he calls it the righteousness which is of Christ,—that righteousness which Christ has procured for us, — "the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," or, as it might more properly be rendered, "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." And in all the other passages of the New Testament, wherein the righteousness of God is mentioned, it generally signifies that method of righteousness revealed in the Gospel by which sinners may be justified, or else the righteousness of Christ, called the righteousness of God, or divine righteousness, because Christ is God.

The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us implies another imputation,—the imputation of our sins to Christ. These, in the Gospel system, mutually involve each other. "God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." * On the one hand, there is an

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

imputation of our sins to Christ. Christ is represented to have stood in the room of sinners; for them He took upon himself our nature, for them He obeyed the law, and for them He suffered on the cross. On the other hand, there is an imputation of Christ's righteousness to us; we are pardoned because He suffered the penalty of our sins; and we are accepted as righteous, because He has for us obeyed the law. There is, then, as it were, an exchange of places; Christ is dealt with as if He were guilty, by reason of our guilt; and we are dealt with as if we were righteous, by reason of His righteousness. He is punished for our demerits; and we are rewarded for His merits. He is condemned; and we are acquitted. The just suffers in the room of the unjust; and the unjust are rewarded in the room of the just. Not that there is any real transmission of our sinfulness on the one hand, or of His righteousness on the other. Christ is not made inherently a sinner by the imputation of our sins; nor are we made inherently righteous by the imputation of His righteousness. "God," says Anselm, "hath made Christ sin for us, that

we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; He therefore was made sin, like as we are made righteousness; not our own, but God's; that is, not from ourselves, but from God; not in ourselves, but in Christ; so He is made sin, not His own, but ours; not in himself, but in us." "When," says Dr. Wardlaw, "we use the word *imputation;* when we speak of our sins being imputed to Christ, and of His righteousness being imputed to us, we do not mean that there is, or can be, any actual transference; as if Christ, by the imputation of our sins, became personally sinful; or we, by the imputation of His righteousness, became personally righteous. No. The sins are still ours, but He endures the penalty on account of them; the righteousness is still His, but we, on account of it, receive the blessing." "We may dispute about the propriety of the words *impute* and *imputation:* but to deny what is thus intended to be expressed by them, is to subvert the Gospel, and to sweep away the sinner's only foundation of hope."*

The great ground of this mutual imputation,

* Wardlaw on *Assurance*, p. 50.

is the relation subsisting between Christ and His people. He is their surety,—their substitute. And that which constitutes this relationship, is *union with Christ.* Christ and His people are so united, that they are looked upon as one; Christ suffers for His people, and His people reign with Christ. There are many analogies given us in Scripture of this divine union—as that between the members of a body and the head—between a husband and a wife—between a vine and its branches—between a building and its foundation. It is a mystical and spiritual union—a union the nature of which we can but imperfectly comprehend—into the mystery of which even angels desire to look. On the one hand, Christ dwells in the heart of His people, by His Spirit. The Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, takes up His abode within them—the same Spirit which animates the head, animates the members—the same life which pervades the vine, pervades all the branches. On the other hand, Christ's people are united to Him by faith. This is the living bond of union on our part—this is that whereby we receive Christ, are looked upon as one with

Him, and are made partakers of all the benefits of His righteousness. "There is no condemnation," says the apostle, "to them who are in Christ Jesus,"—who are united unto Him, and regarded as one with Him.

II.—THE REALITY OF THE IMPUTATION OF CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The righteousness of Christ, we already observed, consists in the satisfaction which He made for sin, and in His perfect obedience to the law of God; and, in both these respects, it is imputed to us;—by reason of Christ's satisfaction, our sins are forgiven; and by reason of Christ's obedience, our persons are accepted as righteous. "Whereas," writes Grotius, "we have said that Christ hath procured two things for us, freedom from punishment, and a reward, the ancient Church attributes the one of them distinctly unto His satisfaction, the other unto His merit. Satisfaction consisteth in the translation of sins, from us unto Him: and merit in the imputation of His most perfect obedience performed for us, unto us." There are, then, two parts of the imputation of Christ's righteousness—the imputation of our

sins to Christ, or of His satisfaction to us; and the imputation of Christ's obedience to us—the one the procuring cause of our forgiveness, the other of our righteousness.

First, There is the imputation of our sins to Christ. Christ, as the sinner's substitute, suffered the punishment of our sins: His sufferings were not for himself, but for us; His death was a sacrifice for sin. That this is the doctrine of Scripture, is too evident to require any proof. The passages which assert it, or refer to it, are innumerable: to quote them, would be to quote a large portion of the New Testament. The sufferings of Christ are always distinguished from the sufferings of any other prophet or martyr, and are constantly described as having been endured in our stead. It is affirmed that Christ died for our sins, that He bore our sins in His own body; that He was delivered for our offences; that He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust; that He was made sin for us, although He knew no sin; that He made His soul an offering for sin; that He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that by one offering, He hath perfected for ever all

them that are sanctified; that He is the propitiation for our sins; that He is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world; that He gave himself a ransom for all; that He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us; that He has reconciled us unto God by His own blood; that His blood cleanseth from all sin; that we have redemption in His blood; that He hath washed us from our sins, in His own blood; and that His blood was shed for many for the remission of sins. These, and numerous other declarations of Scripture, clearly demonstrate that Christ suffered for our sins,—that our sins were reckoned or imputed unto Him, so that He suffered the punishment of them in His own person. In the words of the evangelical prophet: "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Now this necessarily implies that forgiveness is bestowed on the ground of Christ's atonement. If there was an imputation of our sins to Him, there must also be an imputation of the benefit of His satisfaction to us. If He has suffered the penalty of sin on our account, then are we delivered from that penalty. And accordingly, we are expressly informed that we have redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sins; that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses; and that through Christ is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins. This part, then, of Christ's righteousness, consisting in His full satisfaction for sin, is so imputed to believers, that on account of it their sins are forgiven. "David," says the apostle, "describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."*

There are many who think that God is so merciful that He will forgive sins, merely on

* Rom. iv. 6-8.

our repentance, without exacting any atonement. But to this notion, it seems a sufficient reply, that we are entirely ignorant of what may seem fit and proper for God to do with sinners,—that here we have no data to proceed upon,—and that God is the only Judge of the plan most worthy of His wisdom and holiness. And now that He has revealed to us the method of forgiveness through the atonement of His Son,—now that He has declared that pardon can only be procured through the blood of the cross,—it is evident that this is the only method by which His mercy will be extended toward the sinful and the guilty. He gave us a law, at once holy and good; to this law He annexed a penalty; and man, by transgression, became obnoxious to that penalty. It appeared to be absolutely necessary to the honour of eternal justice, that some satisfaction should be made for sin, before the transgressor could be forgiven; and such was the demerit of sin, that no less an expiation was judged to be necessary, than the sufferings and the death of the Son of God. The doctrine of the substitution of Christ for sinners, is the doctrine of the Bible. It is

impossible for language to state it more plainly than it is therein declared; and, therefore, to deny it, and at the same time acknowledge the Bible to be the Word of God, is in reality to call the truth of God into question, and to decide on the plans of infinite Wisdom by our own feeble reason. The inquiry with us, is not what God *could do*, or what God *could not do;* but the inquiry is, what God *will do;* and He has declared, that there is no forgiveness except through the atonement of His Son.

The second part of our doctrine is *the imputation of Christ's obedience to us*, on the ground of which we are accounted righteous before God. As it was necessary for Christ to suffer the penalty of the law, because we had sinned, so it was necessary for Him to obey the precepts of the law, because we had failed in our obedience. The law consists of two parts, a precept and a penalty; it requires obedience to its commands, and pronounces a curse on disobedience. Christ, then, our surety, in order fully to satisfy the demands of the law, had to render obedience to its precepts, as well as to suffer its penalty,—He

had to work out a positive righteousness for us, as well as to atone for guilt. It is only by a perfect righteousness that any creature can be justified before God; and this righteousness Christ, our substitute, has performed for us, and on the ground of this we are justified.

That the obedience of Christ is imputed to us for our justification is asserted in many parts of Scripture. There are many direct testimonies in proof of this. "As," says St. Paul, "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."* The apostle is here contrasting Christ with Adam. As the sin of Adam was the cause of our condemnation, so the obedience of Christ is the cause of our justification; by the one we are made guilty, by the other we are made righteous. The same apostle, speaking of the Jews, says: "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own right-

* Rom. v. 18, 19.

eousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."* The end of the law is the main design of the law, which is to justify man, and to confer on him the reward of eternal life—"the commandment was ordained unto life;" this end Christ, by His perfect obedience to the law, has for all believers fulfilled. "Christ is made unto us righteousness,"†—that is, His most perfect righteousness becomes ours by imputation. "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."‡ As Christ was made sin, so are we made righteous; but He was dealt with as guilty, and so are we dealt with as righteous. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."§ Christ for our sakes was made under the law, the obedience He rendered to it was for us, and therefore the

* Rom. x. 3, 4.
† 1 Cor. i. 30.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.
§ Gal. iv. 4, 5.

benefit of His obedience is granted to us. "And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith."* Paul here mentions two righteousnesses,—his own personal righteousness, and Christ's righteousness, imputed to him by faith. He rejects the former as insufficient to justify him before God, and expresses his earnest desire to obtain the latter. And thus we understand those expressions of the prophet: "Jehovah our righteousness."† "In Jehovah have I righteousness and strength."‡ To this also may be referred all those numerous passages which speak of us being accepted in Christ, and being admitted into heaven for the sake of His merits; these being the benefits which arise from the imputation of His righteousness.

There are some, however, who consider the imputation of Christ's obedience or positive righteousness, as unnecessary for our justification, and as unwarranted by Scripture. According to them, justification consists entirely

* Phil. iii. 9. † Jer. xxiii. 6. ‡ Isa. xlv. 24.

in pardon, and the acceptance of our persons as righteous is not properly included in it. He who is pardoned is freed from sin; and he who is freed from sin is regarded as righteous. Where there is the imputation of no sin, there is also the imputation of righteousness. All, then, that is necessary, is that Christ should make an atonement for our sins; for if sin be forgiven, every obstacle is removed to the favour of God. Hence, then, according to them, the imputation of righteousness, spoken of in Scripture, and the forgiveness of sin, are one and the same thing.

This difference is, in a great measure, a dispute about words. They grant all that we intend by the imputation of Christ's obedience. By pardon, they mean such a pardon as consists not only in the forgiveness of sins, but also in a restoration to the divine favour; and they confess that it is only for the sake of Christ, and not for our own deservings, that we are admitted into heaven. Mere pardon, however, considered in itself, does not necessarily include favour. It is true that all whom God pardons He receives into favour; but this arises not from the nature of the case.

Among men, when a man is pardoned, it seldom happens that he is restored to favour; there is a stain in his character which prevents him occupying his former position. It is one thing to be delivered from the curse of the law, and another thing to be received into the family of God. Nor is it correct to say that the non-imputation of sin is the same as the imputation of righteousness. All that pardon does, is to absolve a man from the punishment which his sins deserve; but it does not suppose that he is thereby esteemed to have perfectly fulfilled the law. The law, as we have already observed, consists of two parts,—a precept and a penalty; and is enforced by two sanctions,—a reward promised to obedience, and a curse pronounced upon disobedience. "This do, and thou shalt live." "The soul that sinneth shall die." Now pardon is merely the removal of the curse pronounced upon disobedience, but it does not imply a right to the reward promised to obedience. The most it does, is to put a man in the legal position, as if he had never sinned; but not as if he had actually fulfilled the law. In order, then, perfectly to fulfil the demands of the

law, Christ, as our substitute, must not merely suffer the penalty, and thus remove the sentence of death passed against us, but also render obedience to the precept, and so procure for us a title to eternal life. Justification does not mean the pardon of sin, though this, in the case of the sinner, is necessarily presupposed, but a declaration of righteousness; and if, in this sense, God justifies the sinner, it can only be on the ground of the imputed obedience of Christ. And hence Paul expresses his earnest desire, to be found at the last day having the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith. Adam in paradise was placed under the law, as a rule of life; as long as he continued in his obedience he preserved his innocence; but still, being under the law, as a covenant of works, he could not be justified by it until the prescribed course of His probation was completed. So the believing sinner is not only forgiven by the imputation of the satisfaction of Christ, and thus, as it were, placed in the position of Adam before he fell; but he is also accepted as righteous, by the imputation of the obedience of Christ,

and thus regarded as if he had actually fulfilled the law.*

In all, then, that Christ did and suffered, He acted as our substitute. His death was an atonement for our sins; and His obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. He has wrought out for us a full and perfect righteousness,—a righteousness which avails not only for the remission of our sins, but to cover all our defects, to preserve us to the end, and at length to admit us into heaven,—a righteousness on the ground of which God now declares us righteous, and will freely acknowledge us as such at the last day,—a righteousness more precious and pure than that white robe of innocence which Adam possessed in paradise, and which is incapable of being stained or lost like his by the imperfections of the creature. The robe of Christ's righteousness is the covering thrown over our nakedness and our sores; that clothing of wrought gold with which the believer is adorned, resplendent as the raiment of the High Priest for glory and beauty; that

* See this controversy fully discussed in Owen on Justification, chap. xii.

wedding garment which admits all who possess it as welcome guests to the marriage of the Lamb. This is that fine linen, clean and white, with which the saints are arrayed in the sanctuary above, and in the splendour of which they shine. This is that divine righteousness, which the apostle calls "the righteousness of God by faith of Christ Jesus," wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and bestowed upon all who believe in His name. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."*

Through the whole of the New Testament, our justification is always connected with what the Lord Jesus Christ has done or suffered. The doctrine of the substitution of Christ for sinners is conspicuous among all the other doctrines of revelation. If we are reconciled to God, it is through the blood of His Son. If we receive the forgiveness of our sins, it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. If we are redeemed from the

* Isaiah lxi. 10.

curse of the law, it is because Christ has been made a curse for us. If we are healed, it is by His stripes. If we are brought near to God, it is because He suffered for us the just for the unjust. If we are justified, it is by faith in His righteousness. If we have access unto God, it is through Christ. If ever we are admitted into heaven, it will be because we have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. In short, this doctrine of justification is inseparably interwoven with Christianity; so that if you were to blot out all those passages which refer to it, and all those passages which are connected with it, you would divest Christianity of every thing that is peculiar to it, of every thing which distinguishes it from the religion of nature, and constitutes it a new revelation from God. This doctrine is the distinguishing doctrine of Scripture; it is not so much a doctrine of Christianity, as Christianity itself; not a part of the Gospel, but the Gospel,—those good news, that Christ "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

But, as we remarked in the preceding

chapter, it is only the man who is convinced of sin that can appreciate the doctrine of justification through the righteousness of Christ. The man feels himself to be a sinner, he is filled with alarm because he is a sinner, his conscience convinces him that all is not right between his soul and God, and his anxious inquiry is, how he might satisfy the upbraidings of his conscience and obtain peace with God. He tries various expedients; he sets to work reforming his conduct; he leaves off many doubtful practices; he becomes more attentive to the exercises of religion. But the more he struggles against sin, the more he discerns the depravity of his heart; he sees still greater abominations within him, and stronger reasons for alarm. It may be that he attempts to atone for his sins by the performance of good works,—to make up for his deficiencies by doing more than others do,—to work out a righteousness of his own. But the grace of God suffers him not to rest upon such false hopes—it proves to him that his sins are far too heinous to be so easily expiated, that the law is far too broad to be so easily fulfilled, that its demands are far too

great to be so easily satisfied, that his corruptions are far too strong to be so easily overcome; and when, it may be, he is about to sink into despair,—to give up the attempt as hopeless, there is revealed to him, by the Spirit of God, a righteousness sufficient to expiate all his sins, and to cover all his deficiencies. And when he truly realises and firmly believes that Jesus died for sin, that there is forgiveness through His blood, that this forgiveness is freely offered to all who accept it, that the invitations of the Gospel are most free, and that the provisions of the Gospel are most ample; that the righteousness which it provides is exactly such as his necessities require; that, ruined in himself, he may be saved in Christ; that no works of his own, no merits, no penances, no satisfactions are required, that all this has been done and provided by his Substitute: it is then that his hopes revive. This is the healing balm to his wounded conscience; his fears are greatly quieted; a divine peace warms and gladdens his soul; and the Sun of Righteousness shines forth, and the dark clouds of alarm and unbelief are dispersed by its rays.

Let it never be forgotten that the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith is the only ground of our justification. If you trust for justification to your own righteousness, you lean upon a broken reed; you put your confidence on that which will not profit; you are engaged in a work which is far above all creature strength; you are fatally deluding your own souls. The righteousness of the very best cannot stand the severity of God's judgment. But in Christ we have a righteousness in which we may confidently trust in the hour of death, because it is the righteousness which God himself has appointed and accepted. To this, then, let us betake ourselves; on this let us confide in life and at death; and in this let us be found when we stand before the tribunal of our God and King. *

* Appendix, Note D.

CHAPTER IV.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION.

It is of great importance to understand distinctly the difference between justification and sanctification. Unless we perceive this, our notions must inevitably be confused, and it will be impossible for us to comprehend the scheme of redemption. Indeed, it is from confounding these two things, which are essentially distinct, and substituting the one for the other, that most of the errors concerning the doctrine of justification have arisen. We propose, then, to devote this chapter to an examination of the scriptural distinction between justification and sanctification, and to a refutation of the error of those who consider our sanctification or inherent righteousness as the ground or formal cause of our justification.

By sanctification we mean the renovation of man's moral nature,—the implantation and the

growth of holiness within him. Man is not only guilty, but also depraved; he is averse to what is good, and inclined to what is sinful; his carnal mind is enmity against God, and the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart are evil. When, then, a man is sanctified, he is delivered in part from his depraved character; he is renewed in the spirit of his mind; his darkened understanding is enlightened; his corrupt affections are purified; his evil habits are broken; his perverted will is changed; a new heart is given him; and the image of God is restored to his soul. A principle of holiness is imparted to him,—a principle which strives against whatever is sinful, and seeks to bring every motive of action into conformity with the law of God. The Holy Spirit, the great author of this work, takes up His abode within him, and transforms his heart into the temple of the living God. Without being thus sanctified, man is incapable of pleasing, loving, or obeying God; he is averse to communion with Him; he is in a state of spiritual death; utterly unfit for the enjoyment and service of heaven. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

Indeed, these two blessings, justification and sanctification, are the two essential parts of salvation. Salvation is a deliverance from sin, from its power as well as from its guilt; it is the restoration of man to the image as well as to the favour of God. Both parts are equally necessary, and the one without the other would be insufficient; for, if we were admitted into heaven with our hearts still unsanctified, we would carry hell in our own bosoms, we would feel that we were not saved in the full sense of the term. Now these two blessings, thus equally essential, are inseparably connected. Whom God justifies, He also sanctifies; whom He pardons by His grace, He also makes holy by His Spirit. Believers are constantly enjoined to cultivate holiness, to mortify their evil inclinations, to maintain good works, to walk in love, and to abstain from the appearance of evil. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."*

But although these blessings are inseparably related,—although the one never occurs without

* 2 Cor. vii. 1.

the other,—yet they must not be confounded together. Mutually connected, they are yet essentially distinct; and we must neither neglect the connexion, nor overlook the distinction: by doing the former, we convert the grace of God into licentiousness,—and by doing the latter, we substitute our own righteousness in the room of the righteousness of Christ. Both errors must be equally guarded against and equally avoided. The connexion between these blessings will hereafter be considered; it is their distinction that is the subject of the present chapter.

In considering the difference between justification and sanctification, we shall briefly state wherein this difference consists; and then at greater length examine the erroneous notion of those who, by confounding them, consider our sanctification, or inherent righteousness, as the ground or formal cause of our justification.

I.—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION.

Justification and sanctification differ *in their nature.* When a man is justified, the guilt of

his sin is taken away; his sins are pardoned; he is restored to the favour of God; the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him; a change comes over his condition with respect to the law; and he passes from a state of condemnation to a state of legal acceptance with God. Whereas, when a man is sanctified, the impurity of his sin is removed; his affections are rendered holy; the image of God which sin had destroyed or effaced is re-established in his soul; a principle of inherent righteousness is implanted within him; a change comes over his moral character; and he passes from a state of spiritual death to a state of spiritual life. Now it is easy to see the marked difference between these two. Justification is a change upon our condition with respect to the law; sanctification is a change upon our moral character. By the one we are reckoned or accounted righteous; by the other we are really made righteous. In the one, the righteousness is imputed and external; in the other, it is personal and internal. The one is a deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin; the other is a deliverance from its power. The one is the cause of our forgiveness; the other is the cause

of our holiness. The one constitutes our title to heaven; the other our preparation for heaven. By the one we are restored to the favour of God; and by the other to His image. The one is the work of Christ for us; the other is the work of the Spirit within us. In short, justification is the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons as righteous; whereas, sanctification is the renovation of our natures by the Holy Spirit.

This difference may be explained by a very obvious illustration. Suppose a man of a depraved character, and guilty of many crimes; he is accused, tried, found guilty, and condemned; but, by an act of favour on the part of his sovereign, his sentence is repealed, and he is pardoned. Now suppose that he is not made better by this act of grace, but proceeds in his wicked course and perpetrates new crimes. Such a criminal might be said to be justified, in so far as his pardon is concerned, but he is not sanctified; there is a change upon his condition, but none upon his character. Or let us suppose that he is so affected with his former danger, and so filled with gratitude for his deliverance, as to reform his conduct and

to become a quiet and useful member of society; then it is evident that there is a twofold change effected,—the one upon his condition, by his being pardoned, and the other upon his character, by his being reformed, and thus he may be said to be both justified and sanctified.

As to the *order* in which these blessings are bestowed, justification is naturally before sanctification; the one is the antecedent and the other the consequent. "Christ," says the apostle, "has reconciled us in the body of His flesh through death, to present us holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable, in His sight."* First, we are reconciled to God by the atonement of His Son, and then we are rendered holy; holiness is not the cause, but the effect or design of our reconciliation. And, again, "Christ gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."† Christ first redeems us from the guilt and punishment of our sins by His own blood, and then purifies us from the stain and defilement of our sins by His Holy Spirit.

* Col. i. 21, 22. † Titus ii. 14.

Sanctification, then, is the effect and evidence of our justification. Justification comes first as the fountain, and sanctification follows as the stream. God having accepted us as righteous for the sake of the righteousness of His Son, adopts us into His family, and confers upon us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we are sanctified.

These two blessings farther differ *in their perfection*. Whenever a man believes on Christ, he is completely justified. All his sins are pardoned; he is for ever delivered from condemnation; he receives a title to eternal life, and can never perish. "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already." "He that believeth hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." Whereas sanctification is always imperfect; it is a work begun, which in this life is never completed; believers are always removed from moral perfection, and sin is never entirely destroyed within them. There can be no difference of degrees in justification; all believers are perfectly and for ever justified; one man cannot be more justified than another. Whereas

sanctification admits of degrees, inasmuch as one believer is more holy than another. Believers are never told to justify themselves; but they are constantly enjoined to mortify their members which are upon the earth, and to follow after holiness. Justification is an act; it is perfected once for all: sanctification is a work, and in this life is never perfect. Whenever a man believes in Christ, he is completely justified; but it will not be until he arrives in heaven that he will be completely sanctified.

II.—THE ERROR OF CONSIDERING INHERENT RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.

It is the doctrine of the Romish Church, that our inherent righteousness is the formal cause of our justification before God. God, they affirm, justifies us by making us internally and personally just; He infuses grace within us, which is the commencement of justification, and after that our justification is continued and increased by a course of evangelical obedience, and thus, on account of our inherent righteousness, God bestows upon us the reward of

eternal life. Justification is with them the same as sanctification; they confound these things which are essentially distinct, and substitute the one for the other.* Nor is this a mere dispute about words, for they regard their sanctification or inherent righteousness as being the cause of their salvation; they substitute their own imperfect righteousness in the room of the perfect righteousness of Christ. And it is evident that this error is by no means confined to the Church of Rome; it is extremely prevalent among all professing Christians; it is the offspring of the natural heart. Man is naturally self-righteous, and he tries every expedient rather than renounce his own holiness, and submit himself entirely to the righteousness of Christ. He would fain share the glory of his salvation with Christ, and thus he endeavours to mix up his own works in some way or other with Christ's merits, as the ground of acceptance with God.

Now we admit that there is, in all the justified, a principle of inherent righteousness; they are made personally and internally right-

* Appendix, Note E.

eous. All the justified are united unto Christ, and "if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." Indeed this is the same as sanctification; for sanctification is nothing else than the production of inherent righteousness. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."* And this righteousness is both habitual and actual.—It is habitual, in that it consists of holy graces in the soul; for believers are said to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."† And it is actual, in that it consists in the performance of good works, and in a life of holy obedience; for believers are said to be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."‡

We grant also that believers, on account of this inherent righteousness, are called and accounted righteous by God. God discerns and acknowledges this righteousness within them; He sees upon them the impress of His own image; and hence He looks upon them as holy and righteous, because they really are so, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Thus we

* Eph. v. 9. † Eph. iv. 24. ‡ Phil. i. 11.

read of Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, that they were "both righteous before God." Abel obtained witness from God "that he was righteous." "He that doeth righteousness," says St. John, "is righteous, even as He is righteous." * And compared with the unregenerate and ungodly, who are dead in sin, all true believers are termed righteous; for although their righteousness is imperfect and stained with many defects, yet it is that which distinguishes them from worldly men. "If," says St. Peter, "the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" †

Still, however, this inherent righteousness, which we acknowledge the justified do possess, and by reason of which they are called and accounted righteous by God, is not and cannot be the ground of their justification; it is not that righteousness whereby their sins are pardoned and their persons accepted, as if they had fulfilled the law. All that is intended is that true believers are sanctified, that a principle of inherent righteousness is implanted within them, and that this holiness of char-

* 1 John iii. 7. † 1 Peter iv. 18.

acter God recognises, acknowledges, and approves. But it is a very different righteousness which is capable of satisfying the demands of the law, and of justifying us before God. "All the regenerated," says Bishop Davenant, "are rightly named and esteemed *righteous* from inherent righteousness, although as yet it is only begun and imperfect. I say *righteous*, not *justified*, because the word righteous (as we are now speaking concerning the righteous) denotes nothing else than one endowed by an infused habit or inherent quality of righteousness: but the word *justified* includes acquittal from all sin, and acceptance to life eternal; which is not founded nor grounded in this inherent righteousness."*

Having thus explained the subject of dispute, we now proceed to show at length, that we are not justified before God on the ground of our sanctification or inherent righteousness; and in doing this, we would observe that such a view of justification is contrary to Scripture, —that it is incompatible with the imperfect nature of our own righteousness,—that it

* Davenant's *Disputatio de Justitia*, translated by Allport, vol. i., p. 14; also Appendix, Note F.

tends to increase pride and vain glory, and derogates from the glory of Christ,—and that it is subversive of the joy and peace of believers.

1. Justification on the ground of our own inherent righteousness is *directly contrary to Scripture.* The passages wherein our own righteousness or works are excluded from all concern in our justification are very numerous. We shall only mention a few. In the epistle to the Romans, St. Paul lays down these two propositions: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." And, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."* And in the same epistle he says: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."† In the epistle to the Galatians, he says: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law:

* Rom. iii. 20, 28. † Rom. iv. 5.

for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* And again, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them."† In the epistle to the Ephesians he writes: "By grace are ye saved through faith: not of works, lest any man should boast."‡ In the epistle to the Philippians, he expresses his earnest desire to be found in Christ, "not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."§ And to mention at present only one other passage, to Titus the apostle writes: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; that, being justified by His

* Gal. ii. 16.
† Gal. iii. 10-12.
‡ Eph. ii. 8, 9.
§ Phil. iii. 9.

grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."*

From these and numerous other testimonies of a similar nature, it would evidently appear that the apostle excludes all works of law and all righteousness of our own, whether habitual or actual, from having any share whatever in our justification before God. Indeed, as Dr. Owen remarks: "No unprejudiced person, whose mind is not prepossessed with notions and distinctions, whereof not the least tittle is offered unto them from the texts mentioned, nor elsewhere, can but judge that the law, in every sense of it, and all sorts of works whatever, that at any time or by any means sinners or believers do or can perform, are, not in this or that sense, but every way and in all senses, excluded from our justification before God."

There are two ways by which our opponents endeavour to escape the force of these statements of the apostle. The one is, that the law of which he speaks is the ceremonial law of the Jews; and the other, that the works which he excludes are legal works performed without the assistance of grace.

* Titus iii. 5, 7.

The first objection is, that the apostle speaks only of the ceremonial law of the Jews, and asserts that the observance of it is unavailing for our justification. But that the apostle's reasoning is not confined to the ceremonial law, but extends to the law of God in general, is evident from his own language. He is here not speaking of the Jews alone, but of the whole world. "Every mouth," says he, "is stopped, and the whole world is guilty before God." Now he could not say this with reference to the ceremonial law, for, except the Jews, none of the human race could either be justified or condemned by this law, inasmuch as they were not under it. The law whereof he speaks is a law written on the consciences of all men; a law disobedience to which has brought all men under the curse; a law by the deeds of which no flesh shall be justified; a law which is not made void, but established by faith; a law one of whose commands is, "Thou shalt not covet,"—all which particulars are true, not of the ceremonial, but of the moral law. The apostle doubtless intended by the law and the works of it, the same as the Jews, with whom he reasoned, understood

by these expressions. But the Jews never regarded the ceremonial law as the whole of the law of God; but only a part of that law which was given to Moses from Sinai. We do not, then, say that the apostle excludes the ceremonial law from his reasoning; for this to the Jews was part of the law of God, because He enjoined it upon them. But what we assert is, that this was not all that he intended. He discourses upon the law of God in general, and asserts that all works of law are excluded from our justification. The Jews possessed the law of Moses; the Gentiles had the law of nature; but the works neither of the one nor of the other, can justify any man before God. Man has sinned; he has broken the law of God; he is guilty, and as such liable to punishment; and, therefore, by the deeds of no law of God, whether moral or ceremonial, natural or revealed, can any man, whether Jew or Gentile, be justified. "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" the law of God, instead of declaring our innocence, convinces us of guilt, and therefore it is impossible that what is the ground of our condemnation can be the ground of our justification. "By

the deeds of the law" or, more literally, "by works of law," in the absolute sense, "shall no flesh," no human being, "be justified."*

The other objection is, that the works of which the apostle speaks as insufficient for justification, are only legal works performed of our own ability before believing, and without the assistance of grace, but not the good works of believers. But the apostle speaks in general terms of "works of the law;" and what are the good works of believers, but works required by the law? The law is perfect, and we cannot possibly go beyond it, so as to perform any good works which the law commands not. Nay, the apostle expressly specifies the works of believers. He mentions the case of Abraham, and states that he was justified not by his works, but by his faith.† But Abraham was a believer and a regenerate man, and he performed many good works by the assistance of grace, but yet these are excluded from his justification. So, likewise, the apostle excludes his own works and righteousness, and declares that they were utterly unavailing to justify him before God; on

* Rom. iii. 20. † Rom. iv. 1-5.

them he places no dependence; and although they were both excellent and numerous, yet he renounces them all; he throws them off as a worthless garment, and desires to be found clothed with the perfect righteousness of Christ. And of all believers, in general, he affirms that they are saved, not by works of righteousness which they have done, but by the free mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus.* All works whatsoever, then, whether of believers or of unbelievers,—whether performed with or without the aid of grace,—are expressly excluded by the apostle from any share in our justification before God.

2. Our second argument is derived from *the imperfection of our own righteousness.* Justification by inherent righteousness is impossible, owing to the imperfect nature of that righteousness. The righteousness of true believers is very far from being perfect; the remains of sin still exist within them; their carnal nature, though mortified, is not destroyed. "If," says St. John, "we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." † In the sight of

* Titus iii. 5. † 1 John i. 8.

infinite purity our own righteousness is as "filthy rags," altogether unworthy of the name, yea, sinful in the sight of a holy God. Compared with the ungodly, believers may be regarded as righteous; but viewed in the light of God's justice and purity, they are sinful. There is not an action which we perform, but is defiled with sin; there is not an act of worship in which we engage, but is stained with imperfection. The very best action of the holiest believer who ever lived could not stand the severity of God's judgment; the eyes of omniscience would discern in it imperfection and sin. We have every reason, then, to deprecate the scrutiny of God, not merely with regard to our ordinary actions but with regard to our religious duties and good works; and to pray with the Psalmist: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

But to this it is replied, that although the inherent righteousness of believers is imperfect, and in itself merits punishment rather than reward; yet Christ has procured for His people a new law of grace, which only requires sincere obedience, as the condition of our

justification and acceptance with God. According to this opinion, sincere obedience is accepted in the room of perfect obedience; so that if a man sincerely does his duty, he does all that is required of him. Now, not to dwell upon the contradiction which is involved in a law demanding imperfect obedience, or upon the ambiguous nature of sincerity as it may be applied to evil as well as to good, it will readily suggest itself, that there is not the least hint of this new law of grace given us in Scripture. Christ is said to have procured for us the forgiveness of sins, by himself suffering the penalty, and to have brought in everlasting righteousness by himself obeying the law; but there is no mention of His having procured a relaxation of the demands of the moral law, or of having introduced this new law of grace. The demands of the law are always binding, and can never possibly be relaxed. It will always be our duty to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; and this law, far from being made void, is established by the Gospel. It is impious to suppose that Christ has purchased for us any abatement of the law of God, as if

He should require a less perfect love to God, and a less disinterested love to our fellow men than the law demanded. And, besides, such a scheme as this makes justification to be as truly by works, as if these were the works of the moral law. It is on the ground of our obedience to this new law of grace that we are justified; and what is this but saying that we are justified by the deeds of this law? But all works of law—all obedience to any law of God whatever—is excluded by the apostle from our justification; and, therefore, obedience to this new law of grace is also excluded.

There are others who suppose that the merits of Christ will make up for the deficiencies in their obedience, and that thus they will be accepted as righteous before God. Although they may see clearly that they cannot be justified wholly on account of their own righteousness, yet, rather than give all the praise to free and unmerited grace, they will mix up their own works with Christ's merits; they will have Christ's righteousness to supply what is wanting in their own, and to make up its deficiency. This form of error is exceedingly prevalent in the world. The

views of many are limited to the idea that if they do all that they can, God will have mercy on them, and will, for the sake of Christ, supply that which is wanting in their obedience. Christ's righteousness is, as it were, complemental to their own. And hence we often find people, when they come to die, expressing their hopes of acceptance with God, not on account of the merits of Christ, but on account of their good moral character,—that they have done little evil in the world. Now this is nothing else but trusting to our own righteousness rather than to the righteousness of Christ—an attempt to mix up works with grace, a thing which is impossible. We cannot be justified partly by grace, and partly by works. If our works be in themselves meritorious, there is no room for the exercise of grace; if they be not meritorious, we cannot be justified by them. "If," says the apostle, "it be by grace then it is no more of works; but if it be of works then it is no more grace." * We can only be justified by works, or by grace; by the righteousness of the law, or by the righteousness of faith;

* Rom. xi. 6.

but we are destitute of the former, and therefore can only be justified by the latter.

3. By considering our inherent righteousness as the ground of our justification, *we exalt ourselves, and derogate from the glory of Christ*,—we usurp that glory which is due to Him alone, as the author and finisher of our faith, by substituting our own in the room of His righteousness.

Such a view of the subject evidently tends to excite our pride. The apostle informs us, that one great design of the Gospel method of justification, was to exclude all boasting or glorying on our part, to humble and abase us before God. "Where," he asks, "is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith."* And again, "By grace are ye saved through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast."† And one design of the whole Gospel dispensation is declared to be, that no flesh should glory in His presence; but that he that glorieth should glory in Christ.‡ Now, it is evident, that by excluding all works of our own, of whatever kind, and all inherent righteousness,

* Rom. iii. 27. † Eph. ii. 8, 9. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 29, 31.

whether actual or habitual, from having any share in our justification before God, we effectually exclude all vain glory on the part of man. Whereas, on the contrary, if we owe our justification to our own righteousness, then have we reason for pride and self-complacency. "To him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory."* If we owe our justification in part to our own works, then we can justly boast of having deserved that part of our justification; it is to our own labour that we ultimately owe our salvation; it is our own efforts that have made us to differ from others.

And as this plan of justification by inherent righteousness exalts ourselves, and gives occasion to pride, so, in the same proportion, does it derogate from the honour and glory of Christ. All that is here ascribed to Christ is, that by His meritorious sufferings, He has procured for us the infusion of a habit of righteousness; and some add a new law of grace, which is satisfied with imperfect obedience. Indeed, the merit of Christ is here con-

* Rom. iv. 4, 2.

fined merely to the first infusion of grace: after that, we are left to work out a righteousness of our own, that thereby we may merit eternal life; and thus much more of our salvation is ascribed to ourselves than to Christ. Now, how dishonourable is all this to Christ; it is depriving Him of the glory of our salvation, and constituting ourselves saviours; or at least sharing the glory between Him and us, and appropriating to ourselves that praise which belongs to Him alone; it is a reflection on His finished work; it is a foolish and presumptuous attempt to perfect that which is already perfect,—to increase the infinite merits of Christ, by adding a mite of our own, that we may glory in it. It is not the *righteous*, but the *ungodly*, whom He justifies. If pardoned, we must be freely pardoned; if justified, it must be wholly by faith; if saved, it must be by the righteousness of Christ alone.

4. Justification on the ground of our inherent righteousness, is *subversive of the joy and peace of believers.* Joy and peace are the privileges of believers. They are represented as the fruits of the Spirit, and are said to arise

from justification. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Now, it is evident, that if our justification does not depend in any degree upon ourselves; if all that is required of us is merely to believe on Christ; whenever we are satisfied that we do so, we are freed in a great measure from anxious thoughts as to our salvation; we can look up unto God as our reconciled Father; we can rest our eternal hopes with confidence on the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing in whom we have believed, and thus can rejoice in our acceptance by Him. And it is also evident that the stronger our faith in Christ's righteousness, as being the only ground of our justification, the more settled is our peace, and the greater is our joy and hope in believing. But, on the contrary, if we depend on our own righteousness, we can have no sure grounds for joy and peace, because we can never know whether we possess that degree of righteousness which is sufficient to expiate our sins, and to bring us to heaven. According to this

view of the subject, assurance of salvation is an impossibility; for justification, like sanctification, cannot be perfected until death. And if this be so, how can we look up to God with any degree of filial love and confidence; when, at the best, we know not whether He is our friend or our enemy—whether He will justify or condemn us? This, certainly, is receiving the spirit of bondage again to fear, and not the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

It is to be feared that some remains of this legal spirit—this trusting to something in or about ourselves, instead of simply to Christ, is, in various shapes, common even among true believers,—that there are few who are entirely destitute of it. It is a hard thing to draw us away from our own righteousness; it is one of the most difficult things in the world for a man to renounce all ground of self-confidence. Driven from one object, we betake ourselves to another. Driven, for example, from our morality, we betake ourselves to our religious services; and driven from these, we, unconsciously it may be, make a saviour of the work of grace within us. We are continually ex-

amining into our character, not for evidences of faith, but for something whereon to trust for acceptance with God; and if we find not ourselves what we wish, we are ready to sink into despondency and despair. Such a spirit must necessarily lead to bondage; if we look for the ground of our justification to something that is wrought within us by the Spirit of God, we must needs be afraid; if the ground of our confidence varies with our spiritual frames, it must be often weak. Hence it is that there is a great want of spiritual liberty among many professing Christians,—an absence of joy and peace in believing,—a prevalence of doubt; and hence arise a gloominess and moroseness of spirit, which can only be a cause of grief to those who possess it; and painful to those who behold it.

The objection to these views, drawn from some expressions in the epistle of St. James, we propose to discuss in a separate chapter. The only other plausible objection is, *that we are said to be judged not by our faith, but according to our works.* "Every one," says the apostle, "shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether

it be good or bad."* This objection we shall meet in another form, when we consider the reward of good works. At present, we would only remark that faith is here entirely excluded. We are not judged partly by our faith, and partly by our works, as they, whose opinions we are opposing, suppose that we are justified; but wholly by our works. The design of the judgment is declarative—to manifest the righteousness of God, and the reality of the faith of those who are pronounced blessed. Now, it is evident that faith cannot be known by itself, but can only be discerned by its works; and as it is the manifestation of our faith that is one end of judgment, this can only be done by the examination of its evidences. Besides, true believers receive a reward of grace, according to their works. It is true that their works merit no reward, and that eternal life is the gift of God; but still they are accepted for the sake of Christ, and are by Him graciously rewarded. Thus, then, to be justified by faith, and to be judged according to our works, are not contradictions. Our only title to heaven, the only

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

cause of our salvation, is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us; but still, according to our works will be our condition in heaven—rewards will be distributed in proportion to our attainments in holiness; for as there are different degrees of misery in hell, so there will be different degrees of happiness in heaven. But if you suppose that to be judged and to be justified, are one and the same, and that this is by works, then stand the consequences, if you will; challenge the justice of God to do its utmost; procure, if you can, a favourable sentence from your Judge; but as for us, we shall desire, with St. Paul, to be found, on that awful day, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Men may trust in their own righteousness when in health, and when their conscience is at ease; and it is to be feared, that many do so when they come to die; but those who are seriously minded — who are truly sincere and in earnest in their inquiries after salvation, will not venture to do so, either when

they are awakened to a sense of sin, or when about to appear before the tribunal of their Judge. A change will then come over their views; they will then see that their own works are not to be trusted at death, and they will seek a better righteousness than their own wherein to confide. Chemnitz, the great Lutheran divine, well remarks, that men think one way concerning justification in their disputations, when wrangling with men like themselves, and another way in their meditations, when they come with conscience into God's presence, as it were to plead their cause. It is in the light of death that we see matters most plainly; and it is then that we find good men of every age, and persuasion, owning the inefficacy of their own righteousness for justification, and placing their trust in the imputed righteousness of Christ,—coming to God as suppliants for mere mercy, and not as claimants for reward. And it is this thought which consoles us amid all the erroneous notions which prevail in the world concerning justification; that not one of them can stand a serious consideration at the hour of death, that then to

earnest inquirers after salvation, justification by grace without works will be seen to be the only possible way, and that they will at length be led to cast themselves on the righteousness of Christ, as their only hope.

Let us seek, then, to place our dependence on Christ, and on Christ alone, for justification. We have seen that we cannot be justified on the ground of our own inherent righteousness, that all works, and righteousness, and merits of our own, are excluded from having any share in our justification before God, and that there is no other righteousness by which we can be justified, but the righteousness of Christ. This is the only foundation on which we can safely build our hopes for time and for eternity. This is the only name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved. Let us renounce all dependence on ourselves, let us take all our works, and merits, and pretensions, and lay them at the foot of the cross, and let us count all these things but as loss that we may win Christ, and be found in Him.

"It is easy," says Calvin, "when the comparison is made among men, for every one to

plume himself on some quality which others ought not to despise; but when we rise to God, that confidence instantly falls and dies away. The case of the soul with regard to God is very analogous to that of the body in regard to the visible firmament. The bodily eye, while employed in surveying adjacent objects, is pleased with its own perspicacity; but when directed to the sun, being dazzled and overwhelmed by the refulgence, it becomes no less convinced of its weakness than it formerly was of its power in viewing inferior objects. Therefore, lest we deceive ourselves by vain confidence, let us recollect that even though we deem ourselves equal or superior to other men, this is nothing to God, by whose judgment the decision must be given. But if our presumption cannot be tamed by these considerations, He will answer us as He did the Pharisees: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Go now and make a proud boast of your righteousness among men, while God in heaven abhors it. But what are

the feelings of the servants of God, of those who are truly taught by His Spirit? "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

CHAPTER V.

THE NATURE OF JUSTIFYING FAITH.

In the preceding chapters we have considered the nature of justification, as being a declaration of righteousness by God, the moral Governor of the universe; and the ground of justification, as consisting not in our inherent righteousness, but in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. We now come to another most important branch of our subject,—What we must do in order to be interested in this justifying righteousness of Christ; in other words, What is that whereby a sinner is made a partaker of the benefits arising from Christ's substitution? This is faith. "A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law."

In considering faith as the divinely appointed instrument of our justification, there are two points which require our attention: The nature of faith considered as justifying; and, the influence of faith in our justification.

These points are so important and extensive, that we shall devote a separate chapter to each.

In this chapter, then, we shall consider the nature of justifying faith. Great importance is assigned to faith in the sacred Scriptures. The highest commendations are bestowed upon it; the most illustrious actions are ascribed to it; it is invested with almost unlimited efficacy; it is represented as a grace of pre-eminent excellence, yea, as the root of all other graces, the source and origin of holiness; and it is not only declared to be essential to salvation, but it alone of all graces is described as taking a part in our salvation as being the divinely appointed instrument by which we are justified, sanctified, and glorified. Possessed of it, we are said to be in a state of salvation; destitute of it, we are declared to be condemned already, and to have the wrath of God abiding upon us. Thus, when the Jews asked our Saviour: "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" our Lord replied,—"This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."*

* John vi. 28, 29.

And when the Philippian jailor, with a better spirit, put a similar question to St. Paul: "What must I do to be saved?" the apostle returned an answer in all respects the same,—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* So, also, when our Lord sent forth His apostles, the terms of His commission to them were: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."† And elsewhere it is written: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already; because He hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."‡ Our salvation, then, is inseparably connected with our faith; with faith we shall be saved, without faith we shall be condemned. Although the atonement of Christ is infinite in value, yet its

* Acts xvi. 30, 31. † Mark xvi. 15, 16.
‡ John iii. 18, 36.

efficacy is expressly limited to those who believe.

A subject of such surpassing importance surely requires our earnest and most attentive consideration; and this is the more necessary as there is reason to believe that there is a great want of clearness in men's notions concerning faith,—a confusion and obscurity in their views; so that the opinions of many concerning a matter of such importance are either erroneous or indefinite. Indeed, there is scarcely any one subject of practical religion involved in deeper obscurity. Endless distinctions are made of various kinds of faith; a certain course is dogmatically laid down, through which a man must pass before he can be possessed of saving faith; metaphysical definitions are given which are almost impossible to comprehend; and technical words and phrases are employed, with the professed view of elucidating the subject, whose only effect is to render it more obscure. Many seem to think that there is some mystical element, which converts belief into saving faith. Others insist greatly on an unintelligible distinction between believing God, or

believing in God, which they say is not faith, and believing upon God, which is faith. But if we turn to the Word of God, there we find every thing plain and luminous; no subtle distinctions—no metaphysical difficulties; all these spring from the writings of men.

We admit, however, that it is difficult to give a precise and logical definition of justifying faith; for there is a danger of making the definition either too narrow or too broad. Religious faith is an active belief in the testimony of God; and justifying faith is an active belief in that particular testimony with which justification is connected. We use the word *active*, to distinguish it from a cold, unmeaning, and passive assent. It is thus defined in the Assembly's Larger Catechism: "Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the Gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and His righteousness therein held forth for

the pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation."* It is, however, with the *nature* of justifying faith that we are at present concerned, rather than with its *cause*, as being "wrought in the heart by the Spirit and Word of God," or with its *effect*, which is presupposed, namely, justification. We would, therefore, define justifying faith to be,—*An active belief in the testimony of God concerning His Son the Lord Jesus Christ as making an atonement for sin, whereby the sinner, feeling himself condemned by the law, relies on Christ and His merits for justification.*

In order fully to explain the nature of justifying faith, there are two points to be considered,—the nature of religious faith in general, as being, in the terms of the definition, *an active belief in the testimony of God;* and the object and action of justifying faith,—its object being, *the testimony of God concerning His Son the Lord Christ as making an atonement for sin;* and its action being, that *the sinner, feeling himself condemned by the law, relies on Christ and His merits for justification.*

* Larger Catechism, Question lxxii.

I.—THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH.

We do not find much explanation given us in Scripture of the nature of faith. The apostles dwell much on what we are to believe, but seldom think of informing us how we are to believe. They insist much on the objects of faith, the truths to be believed; they dwell also on the efficacy of faith, how that our justification and salvation are inseparably connected with it; but they give little explanation of what they meant by faith and believing. Nor do we find the first converts asking any explanation of faith, notwithstanding the supreme importance attached to it. From all this, it would appear that the sacred writers attached no unusual, no hidden, no inexplicable, no mystical meaning to the word faith; but used it in its common and ordinary acceptation. The first disciples evidently understood it in its usual meaning; nor did the apostles ever explain that they used it in any other sense.

There are only two passages of Scripture which resemble a formal definition of faith,—the one given us by the apostle Paul, and the

other by the apostle John. In the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul says: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;"* or, as it might be more correctly rendered: "Faith is the confidence of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen." "Faith is the confidence of things hoped for." Its objects are things hoped for—future blessings revealed and promised: and faith itself is the confidence that God is both able and faithful to fulfil His promises,—it is "judging Him faithful who hath promised." Again, "Faith is the conviction of things not seen." Its objects are things not seen, things which are neither perceptible to our senses nor evident to our reason, but rest, as to their truth, on the authority of God; and faith is the conviction of these things not seen,—the firm persuasion of their reality and importance, as revealed by God.

The other definition is that given us by the apostle John: "If," says he, "we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that

* Heb. xi. 1.

believeth on the Son of God hath the testimony in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not in the testimony that God hath testified concerning His Son. And this is the testimony that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." * In this passage, faith is represented as a belief in testimony. There is here the testifier, the testimony, and the object of testimony. The testifier is God. "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater." The testimony is that which God has borne concerning Christ. "This is the testimony that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." And the object of testimony is Christ himself. "He that believeth on the Son hath the testimony in himself."

From these definitions, it would appear that faith is used in Scripture in its ordinary acceptation, as signifying a belief in testimony or that assent which the mind gives to things credible on the authority of testimony. An assent to things, the truth of which is apparent to our senses, evident in themselves, or

* 1 John v. 9-11, literally rendered.

demonstrable by arguments, is properly called knowledge; but when anything is proposed to us which is neither apparent to our senses, nor evident to our reason, but the truth of which rests on the testimony of others, an assent to it is called faith, or belief. Indeed, as Dr. Wardlaw remarks, "faith is incapable of any subsistence in the mind, except as regarding a testimony. It derives its very being from the existence of the thing believed. If the object be taken away, the faith cannot, in the nature of things, remain. The cessation of the one must be the cessation of the other. There can no more be faith without something believed, than there can be love without something loved. There may be the mental capacity of believing what appears true, as there is the mental capacity of loving what appears amiable; but the actual exercise of faith and love, there never can be without appropriate objects." Now, faith is either human or divine, according as the testifier is man or God. Human faith is that assent which we give to things credible on the testimony of man. Such is the belief which we have in the words and affections of one another; and

it is upon this kind of faith that we proceed in the ordinary affairs of life. Divine faith, again, is that assent which we give to things credible on the testimony of God. Such is the belief which we have in the doctrines of revelation, the promises of the Gospel, and the realities of a future state.*

Religious or divine faith, then, is a belief in the testimony of God. The testifier is God; it is His testimony, His revelation, His Word. The apostle John contrasts the testimony of men with the testimony of God; now we all know what it is to receive the testimony of men, the apostle tells us that it is exactly the same to receive the testimony of God; there is no difference in the manner of receiving, but in the testimony received. "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God, which He hath testified of His Son." The testimony of God is greater, because it is more worthy of credit; it affords surer grounds of confidence; but, in the nature of the confidence or belief there is no difference. As if the apostle had said, If we act upon the testi-

* See Pearson on the Creed, Art. I.

mony of man, and we do so in many important matters, although man is fallible; much more reason have we to act upon the testimony of God, who is infallible and incapable of deceiving, or of being deceived. And hence it is that the Gospel is called a testimony; and faith is described as a belief in that testimony. "Our testimony among you was believed."*

It follows from what has been said, that faith is founded on the moral attributes of God; it arises from confidence in God. The truth of all testimony depends on the knowledge and veracity of the testifier; on his knowledge to know the truth of what he relates, and on his veracity to relate it according to the measure of his knowledge. So belief in the testimony of God is founded on belief in His moral character; in His omniscient and unerring wisdom, which renders it impossible for Him to be deceived; in His holiness, which makes Him incapable of deceiving; and especially in His truth and faithfulness. "He is a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He."† He who believes what God has revealed, places his reliance on the truth of

* 2 Thess. i. 10. † Deut. xxxii. 4.

God. "He that hath received His testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true."* Whereas he who does not believe, is guilty of no less a crime than calling the truth of God in question. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the testimony that God gave of His Son."†

It is evident that faith supposes knowledge. We cannot believe any testimony except we first hear it, and in some measure understand it. Were a person to declare any thing to us, although we might have no doubt as to his veracity, yet if we understood not what he said, if he spoke to us in an unknown tongue, if we had no just apprehension of the terms of his declaration, we could not possibly believe his testimony; it would awaken no corresponding ideas in our mind. So with regard to the testimony of God, we must know the truth before we can believe it; spiritual illumination comes first, and then faith. "How," asks the apostle, "shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." ‡ "This," says our

* John iii. 33. † 1 John v. 10. ‡ Rom. x. 14, 17.

Saviour, "is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."* The Spirit first enlightens the understanding, and then enables us to embrace the truth. Faith, far from being, as some suppose, the offspring of darkness and ignorance, is the child of light and knowledge; it is not opposed to reason, but is itself a rational act; and can only be correct when the understanding is enlightened, and neither blinded by prejudice, nor led astray by error.

But it must not be supposed that faith is merely a cold inoperative assent of the understanding to the truths of the Gospel. The apostles evidently never intended, when they called upon men to believe, merely that they should admit such and such propositions as true, but that they should act up to their belief, that their faith should be real and active, and not nominal and passive. The testimony of God is of such a nature, that if it be truly understood, and firmly believed, it will necessarily influence our heart and conduct. The truths of the Gospel are not like

* John xvii. 3.

the propositions of mathematics or the facts of history, which have no practical bearing upon us; but they are momentous realities—a terrible disease and a precious remedy—a frightful destruction which threatens us, and a way of escape pointed out; and, therefore, if fully understood, and realised, and believed, they must exert a powerful influence upon us. That man, for example, who does not make it the great business of his life to prepare for another world, cannot properly be said to believe in the doctrine of a future state; he may assent to its truth as a general proposition, he may profess that he does believe; but it is a vain, and worthless, and insincere profession, for his faith is dead. The man who has real faith, will and must act according to his belief; the truths of the Gospel being actively embraced, will necessarily affect his heart and influence his conduct. And hence it follows, that the actings of faith will be different according to the different nature of the objects to which it is directed. It will lead a man to tremble at the threatenings of the Word of God, to trust in the promises, to obey the precepts, and to avoid whatever is forbidden.

"By this faith," says the Westminster Confession, "a Christian believeth to be true whatever is revealed in the Word for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come."*

Such, then, is the nature of religious faith. There is nothing unusual, nothing mystical in its meaning; no extraordinary, no hidden sense. It is an active belief in the testimony of God. "It is the confidence of things hoped for." "It is the conviction of things not seen." It implies both the exercise of the understanding and of the will: of the understanding, in comprehending and assenting to the testimony; and of the will, in acting upon it. The testimony must be known before it can be believed. If the testimony be not known or misunderstood, it is evident that the faith is false and erroneous. But the testimony must not only be known, but received and acted upon; and it is this

* Confession of Faith, xiv. 2.

element of activity, or compliance with the testimony, which imparts to faith all its value. And hence the apostles describe saving faith as the exercise of the heart. "With the heart," says St. Paul, "man believeth unto righteousness." * "If," says Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, "thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptised."†

II.—THE OBJECT AND ACTION OF JUSTIFYING FAITH.

Religious faith derives its value not so much from its nature, as from the objects to which it is directed; and although it has respect to all the doctrines and precepts of revelation, yet, considered as justifying, it has a special regard to the atonement of Christ. It is a belief in the testimony of God concerning His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. This is evident from that passage of St. John's epistle formerly adverted to. "This is the testimony of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son, hath the testimony in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made Him a liar; because he believeth

* Rom. x. 10. † Acts viii. 37.

not the testimony that God hath testified of His Son. And this is the testimony that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."* It is, then, the testimony of God concerning His Son — what God has revealed concerning Christ—that is the great object of saving faith; to our belief in this, our salvation is inseparably connected. Many truths of God may be believed, but if the truth concerning Christ be not believed, there can be no salvation. And this is still more clearly stated by St. John in other parts of the same epistle: "Every spirit that confesseth," confession being the utterance of believing, "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"† And

* 1 John v. 10-12. † 1 John iv. 2, 14, 15; v. 1, 4, 5.

in his Gospel the same truth is distinctly stated: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."* So also St. Paul says: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."†

Our justification and salvation, then, are not connected with faith in general, but with faith in Christ as its object. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Not that saving faith excludes other revealed truths; by embracing this one, it virtually embraces all; for they all depend on it, or are derived from it. Whilst it embraces all that God has revealed, it fixes itself chiefly on His testimony concerning His Son.

* John xx. 31. † Rom. x. 9, 10.

The great doctrine concerning the Lord Jesus Christ to be believed—the testimony that God gave of Him—is that He has made an atonement for sin. "This," says St. Paul, "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* The atoning death of Christ is the only cause of our salvation, the ground of our justification, the object of our reliance, the source of all those blessings which flow to the believer. It, in short, constitutes the Gospel, those glad tidings of great joy, that "faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation." It is this alone which has satisfied the justice of God, and restored honour and glory to the broken law. We are sinners, and our only hope of forgiveness is that Christ has suffered for sin; the only righteousness by which we can hope to be justified, is the righteousness of Christ, received by faith. Through the righteousness of Christ, a way of justification has been opened up; and all who apply to Christ by faith are interested in this righteousness, and are justified before God. Faith in Christ's atonement,

* 1 Tim. i. 15.

is that which is required of us for justification. We must believe that Christ offered up himself as a propitiation for our sins; that His great work has been finished and accepted by God the Father; that He is a divine, and therefore an all-sufficient Saviour; that He is able and willing to save to the uttermost; that His righteousness is the only ground of our justification; and that salvation through His merits is freely offered to, and bestowed upon all who believe. "This is the testimony that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

But justifying faith is not a bare passive assent to the truth that Christ has made an atonement for sin; it is such a spiritual understanding of its nature, and such a firm persuasion of its reality, as will produce reliance on the Saviour. If we fully understand and really believe the Gospel, God's testimony concerning His Son, we shall, as a necessary consequence of our reception of the Gospel, renounce all dependence on ourselves, and rely entirely on the merits of Christ. Reliance on Christ is absolutely essential to saving faith; it is this, in short, which constitutes

it saving. To believe that Christ is the only ground of our salvation, is exactly the same as to trust or rely on Christ for salvation. When once we fully understand and believe that salvation is only through Christ, we will seek it in no other, but will rely entirely on the Saviour. A man who believes that he is a sinner, and who feels his danger, and who believes that Christ is the Saviour of sinners, will embrace Him as He is proposed to his acceptance in the Gospel. Without this reliance on Christ, there can be no justifying faith; and in proportion as our reliance is weak or strong, so is our faith. We must commit our souls entirely to the care of Christ, to be washed from guilt in His precious blood, and to be clothed with His perfect righteousness. Feeling ourselves to be lost, and knowing that Christ is the Saviour of the lost, to Him we must repair, and on Him we must confide.

There has been much dispute whether reliance or trust in Christ, and faith in Christ, are the same; or whether reliance is only the necessary and immediate effect of justifying faith. This is in a great measure a dispute

about words, as both parties equally assert the necessity of reliance to justifying faith. Justifying faith we have defined to be, "an active belief in the testimony of God concerning His Son the Lord Jesus Christ;" and it is reliance or trust, that is the appropriate action of this faith. The testimony to be believed, is that Christ is the Saviour of sinners; and if this testimony be acted upon, we must rely on Christ for salvation. And hence we hold that true faith in Christ, and reliance upon Him, are so inseparably connected, that the one can really never exist without the other. If there could possibly exist a true belief in the Gospel testimony which produces no trust in the Saviour, then such a belief would not be justifying or saving; it is a belief entirely passive and inoperative, and therefore not the belief intended by the apostles. And accordingly we find, that whereas in some passages of Scripture, belief that "Jesus Christ came in the flesh,"—"that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God,"—and "that God hath raised Jesus from the dead," is stated to be saving faith; in other passages, trust and confidence are represented to be its chief elements. Thus

St. Paul says: "That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ."* "Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."† "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast to the end."‡ "Faith is the confidence of things hoped for." "Whether," observes Dr. Owen, "this trust or confidence shall be esteemed of the essence of faith, or as that which, on the first fruit and working of it, we are found in the exercise of, we need not positively determine. I place it, therefore, as that which belongs unto justifying faith, and is inseparable from it. For if all we have spoken before concerning faith may be comprised under the notion of a firm assent and persuasion, yet it cannot be so, if any such assent be conceivable exclusive of this trust."§

From what has been said, we may see wherein consists the necessity of conviction of sin, previous to justification. A man, unless

* Eph. i. 12. † 1 Tim. iv. 10. ‡ Heb. iii. 14.

§ Owen on Justification, chap. ii. p. 94, 95.

he be really convinced of sin — unless he believe and feel himself to be a sinner condemned by the law, cannot understand the nature of the Gospel testimony. The Gospel is a remedy, and, therefore, if a man does not believe in the disease, he cannot believe in the remedy. The declaration that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," can only be fully understood by those who acknowledge and feel that they are sinners. Conviction is not a condition of our justification; but without it we will not believe that we might be justified. We must first feel ourselves to be sick, before we will betake ourselves to the physician. We must first know ourselves to be lost, before we will come to the Saviour. A man will not renounce all dependence on his own works, unless he perceives that he is already condemned by the law, and that his works are unavailing for his justification. And hence, saving faith has well been described as "the flight of a penitent sinner unto the mercy of God in Christ." As long as we think ourselves in safety, it is evident that we will never betake ourselves to Christ for security; if we feel not that we are con-

demned already, we will not believe on Him for justification. The sinner's mouth must be stopped as to any pleas, defences, or excuses, and he must humbly acknowledge himself to be guilty before God. "No man," says Dr. Burder, "can, by any possibility, believe on Christ, because no man can, by any possibility, comprehend the character of Christ as a Saviour, who has not right views of the character of man as a sinner."*

The end which the sinner has in view in believing on Christ, is his justification,—how he may get his sins pardoned, the heavy load of guilt removed from his conscience, and his soul saved from hell. The immediate working of justifying faith, we have defined to be, that *the sinner, feeling himself condemned by the law, relies on Christ and His merits for justification.* "We have believed," says St. Paul, "in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified."† It is only the man, then, who is convinced of sin, who feels himself lost, and who really desires to be saved, that will believe on Christ. He knows and feels that this is the only way of salvation—the only righteousness by which

* Burder's Way of Salvation. † Gal. ii. 16.

he can be justified; Christ is all in all to him; He is such a Saviour as his necessities require. Convinced of sin, alarmed by reason of his danger, and persuaded of the ability and willingness of Christ to save, he comes to Him as a condemned and helpless sinner, and intrusts Him with the care of his soul. "I know," says Paul, "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

We need hardly add that justifying faith must bear a personal application. It is not a general belief that Christ died for sins, or that He loved the world, it is an application of all this to ourselves. Paul spoke the true language of justifying faith when he said: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* Justifying faith, then, is what has been called an appropriating principle; not a mere general assent to the testimony, but an application of the testimony to

* Gal. ii. 20.

ourselves. It is not, indeed, a belief in our own personal religion—not a belief that we are in a state of salvation; it looks entirely without; its object is Christ; that Christ is able and willing to save sinners, and therefore us among the rest; that all are freely invited, and that therefore we are as welcome as any to come to Christ.

The whole subject may perhaps be put in a still clearer light by one or two illustrations. When God was about to drown the old world, he commanded Noah to build an ark. Now, what was it that induced Noah to do so? How came it to pass that he and his family were saved, whilst the whole world was drowned? It was not because he was influenced by the dictates of natural reason. There were no appearances of the coming deluge, no analogy to go upon; in a word, no natural probability of such an occurrence. The only reason which induced him to build the ark was, that he believed the testimony of God. "By faith," says the apostle, "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he con-

demned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."* It was his faith which saved him: if he had not believed, he would have been drowned with the rest of the world.

Or let us take the illustration which our Saviour himself gives of the brazen serpent. When the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, Moses was enjoined to make the proclamation that whosoever looked unto the serpent of brass would live. Now the Israelites would have no difficulty in understanding the proclamation,—what was meant by looking to the serpent. Whenever they felt the sting of the fiery serpents, they would lift up their eyes to the serpent raised upon the pole; and thus it was evidently faith in the divine declaration which was the cause, under God, of their cure. It is precisely similar with faith in the Gospel testimony. We are sinners, in danger of eternal death as the punishment of sin. God has, however, revealed in His Word that Christ has died for our sins, and that if we believe in Him we shall be saved. If we are convinced that this testimony comes from

* Heb. xi. 7.

God, and if we truly believe in our lost condition, we shall place our reliance on Christ for salvation; believing the divine declaration, we shall act upon it; we shall look to Christ with the eye of faith and be saved. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Saving faith is described by various phrases and images in the Word of God; but in all of them it is represented as a believing application to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is described as coming unto Christ, as receiving Christ, as looking unto Christ, as resting on Christ, as flying unto Christ for refuge; all of which phrases evidently import an application to Christ. So also the same is the case in all the various images by which faith is portrayed. Is Christ represented under the similitude of a feast? Faith is the mouth which feeds upon Him. Is He represented to us as the brazen serpent exalted upon the pole? Faith is the eye with which we look unto Him and are saved. Is He represented to us as a white garment of purity? Faith is the hand which

puts on those robes of righteousness. Or is He represented to us as a city of refuge? Faith is the feet with which we flee to the stronghold from the avenger of blood.

It is too evident that there may be faith which is false and spurious. Both the Word of God and ordinary observation warn us that this is the case. In the Scriptures we read of many who believed in the name of Jesus, because they saw the miracles which He did, but to whom Jesus did not commit himself, because He knew what was in them.* Some of the Jewish rulers are called believers, and yet we are told that they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.† In the parable of the sower, our Lord tells us that the seed sown on the rock represents those who hear the word, and receive it with joy, and for a while believe, but in the time of temptation fall away.‡ Simon Magus, we are informed, believed, although his heart was not right in the sight of God, and he was then in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.§ And St. James, in his epistle,

* John ii. 23-25.
† John xii. 42, 43.
‡ Luke viii. 13.
§ Acts viii. 13, 23.

speaks of a faith without works which is dead and useless. And observation too faithfully corroborates these statements of revelation. In this age of external profession, there are multitudes who profess their faith in Christianity, who never thought of doubting it, but whose faith exerts little or no influence upon them, whose moral conduct would not be greatly altered were there no Gospel, or had Christ never appeared in the world. It is very possible that you may render a formal, unmeaning assent to the truths of Christianity; but if this be all, if your faith proceed not to action, it is evident your faith is not the faith which justifies; it is a faith which is destitute of works, and therefore is, as the apostle says, dead, being alone; it is practical unbelief, a faith which acknowledges God in words but in deeds denies Him.

There is a great difference between spurious and justifying faith. The one is only the shadow and picture, of which the other is the substance and reality; in the one the assent is passive and inoperative, in the other it is real and active. The true believer has a just apprehension of the Gospel testimony; the

insincere believer, misapprehending the testimony, believes something else, and thus his faith is false and erroneous. The former relies on Christ alone for salvation; the latter chiefly on his own performances. The former, feeling himself lost, earnestly desires justification through the merits of Christ; the latter, having never truly learned his lost condition, sees not his absolute need of the Saviour. The former accepts Christ on His own terms; the latter, as it were, bargains with Christ, and would mix up his own works with His righteousness. Men often deceive themselves, thinking that they are believers when they are not, mistaking in most cases a mere absence of thought and doubt for the presence of faith.

How important, then, is the inquiry, Have we justifying faith? Do we truly believe the testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ? Do we trust on Christ alone for salvation? Or is our faith false and spurious,—a mere name without any reality? Justification is evidently a matter of infinite importance. We are all sinners; the wrath of God abideth upon us; the curse of a broken law is directed against us; we may, however, be

justified,—but justified only in one way, by believing on Christ. How important is it truly to believe! Let nothing prevent you doing this. Study the testimony; believe the testimony; rely on the testimony. The testimony is, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. This must be true, for it is the testimony of God. Embrace it then; place your entire reliance upon Christ; renounce all dependence on yourselves; for if the merits of Christ be the ground of our salvation, there can be no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved. "This is His commandment,"—the great commandment of Christianity,—"That we should believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, as He gave us commandment."

In believing we should attend more to the *objects of faith*, than to its *nature* as a mental act. There are many who are continually inquiring whether they have the right kind of faith, and who are constantly seeking for marks to prove its genuineness. But faith is true or false chiefly with respect to the truth or falsehood of the objects to which it is directed.

We should, then, be anxious not so much "whether our faith is of the right kind, as to whether we believe the right things." It is the nature of the truths believed that imparts to faith all its efficacy; and, therefore, it is to these that we should chiefly direct our attention. It is thus only that faith is both begun and strengthened. It is by directing it to its proper objects,—by exercising it on these objects,—by attending, not so much to the mind believing, as to the truths believed,—in a word, "by looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," that faith in Christ, if previously awanting, is implanted in the soul, and if already present is strengthened, increased, and confirmed.

It is important here to observe the connexion which there is between justifying faith and peace. Before an awakened sinner comes to Christ for justification, he is far from peace, he is suffering from the convictions of sin, his conscience is awakened, he is alarmed under a sense of his danger, and he dreads his appearance before the tribunal of his Judge. But whenever he realises and believes the testimony of God concerning His

Son,—that there is a way of salvation opened up; that Christ died for his sins; that Christ is able and willing to save; and that he is freely invited to come to Christ; his fears will be allayed, and peace will spring up in his soul. Peace, then, is the immediate effect of believing; it is one of the first fruits of faith. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the testimony concerning Christ, the knowledge that there is a way of salvation provided, that imparts peace unto the soul. Afterwards, indeed, this peace in believing will be confirmed by the peace of experience; we will rejoice, not merely in the promise that we shall be saved, but in the evidence that we are saved; not only in the remedy provided, but in the remedy producing a cure. But still, in the first instance, it is by simply believing the Gospel message that we are to obtain peace; it is by coming to the Saviour that we will obtain rest, rest as the immediate effect of compliance with the invitation,—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

CHAPTER VI.

FAITH THE INSTRUMENT OF JUSTIFICATION.

HAVING in last chapter considered the nature of justifying faith, the next subject of inquiry which presents itself to our consideration, is the influence of faith in our justification. In this chapter, accordingly, we would explain the manner in which faith justifies; and then inquire into the philosophy of the connexion between justification and faith,—whether we understand this connexion, or whether it is a mystery,—whether we see any reasons why the saving operation of Christ's death should be limited to those who believe the Gospel testimony, or whether we receive this truth as revealed—a statement of fact—a part of the Gospel plan for which no reasons are assigned.

Our justification is, in Scripture, ascribed to various causes. We are said to be justified by the grace of God, by the blood of Christ, by the knowledge of Christ, by

the obedience of Christ, and by the faith of Christ. One cause of justification does not necessarily exclude another, as there are different kinds of causes. Thus, in one sense, a man is justified only by grace; in another sense, only by the righteousness of Christ; and, in a third sense, only by faith. The *source* or *origin* of justification; that from which it springs, that which, if we may so speak, induced God to devise the plan of salvation, and to justify the sinner—is His own free grace and love. The *ground* or *meritorious* cause of justification, that by reason of which God justifies the ungodly; that righteousness on account of which He declares us righteous—is the perfect righteousness of Christ. The *instrumental cause* of justification—that which gives us an interest in the justifying righteousness of Christ—that which unites us to Christ, and places us in a justified condition—is faith. And the *end* or *final cause* of justification—that which it is designed to accomplish—is the salvation of believers, and the glory of divine grace.

That our justification is, in a peculiar sense,

ascribed to faith in Scripture,—in such a sense as it is ascribed to no other grace,—is too evident to require proof. This is the uniform doctrine of St. Paul. The passages in his epistles which assert, or imply it, are very numerous. We merely give a few examples to complete our argument. "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith." "Therefore, we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." "It is one God that shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham." * From all these passages, and from many more which might be given, it is evident that our justification is connected with faith, in such a manner as it is connected with no other grace;—this is, as it were, the condition on our part to be performed; that, without possessing which we cannot be justi-

* Rom. i. 17; iii. 28, 30; iv. 16; v. 1; Gal. iii. 8.

fied. It is the righteousness of Christ which justifies, and it is by faith that it justifies. Indeed the passages in proof of this are so plain and explicit, that it is difficult to see how it can with any appearance of reason be denied, or called in question.

There are two points which here require to be considered; *First*, The manner in which faith justifies; and *Secondly*, The reasons why justification is ascribed to faith.

I.—THE MANNER IN WHICH FAITH JUSTIFIES.

Faith does not justify us meritoriously, as if it were our own righteousness, or the ground of our justification before God. The only meritorious cause of justification is the righteousness of Christ. Faith is in Scripture always opposed to merit—believing to working; we are justified by faith, that it might not be by works. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* Works of any kind can never be the meritorious cause of our justification. We are guilty, and as such must always be regarded by God,

* Rom. iv. 5.

and, therefore, nothing that we can do or suffer can be of such value as to deserve justification. But if faith were the meritorious cause of our salvation, we would as effectually displace Christ, as if we asserted that justification came by works. To believe in order to be justified without works, and yet to conceive faith to be a work meriting justification, is a contradiction. "Where," asks the apostle, "is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith."* But it is evident that if faith were the meritorious cause of our justification, we would have as much reason to boast as if we were justified by works. "There is a perfect contrariety between grace and works; but there is a perfect, and simple, and beautiful harmony between grace and faith. Justification *is* by the latter, *that it may be* by the former."† Besides, if justification were annexed to faith as a meritorious condition, then the question naturally suggests itself, How should the degree of faith be estimated? If it be a perfect faith, then it is evident that none would be justified, for this no Christian

* Rom. iii. 27. † Wardlaw on Assurance, p. 47.

ever did, or ever will possess. If, on the other hand, it be an imperfect faith, then what degree of imperfection does it admit, and still answer the end? Nay, if this were the case, then one man who is strong in the faith would be more justified than another man who is weak; which is absurd, as there can be no degrees of justification. Or, if it be admitted that all are alike justified, then more of justice and less of grace would appear in the justification of some than in that of others; whereas the apostle asserts that the righteousness which justifies, is "alike unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference,"* because all are guilty.

There is one passage, however, from which it is plausibly argued, that St. Paul asserts that our faith itself is that righteousness which justifies—that it is imputed or reckoned unto us as our justifying righteousness before God. Discoursing upon the justification of Abraham, the apostle says: "What saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned

* Rom. iii. 22.

of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* From which it is argued, that the faith of Abraham was that very righteousness which justified him before God.

A little attention, however, to the words themselves, will at once convince us, that whatever is their meaning, they cannot imply that our faith is that righteousness which justifies. The apostle opposes faith to works —grace to debt: but there can be no opposition, if faith itself were a work of merit. Besides, the apostle does not affirm that faith is counted or imputed unto Abraham as his justifying righteousness, but for righteousness, or, more correctly rendered, *unto* righteousness. We do not add that a single passage, the meaning of which is doubtful, should not overthrow many other passages, whose meaning is plain and explicit; surely the former should be interpreted by the latter, and not the latter by the former.

There are two interpretations given of this passage, either of which remove the difficulty.

* Rom. iv. 3-5.

The one is, that faith is here used for its object, namely, the righteousness of Christ, which alone justifies the sinner before God. In like manner as Christ is said to be our Hope, hope being put for its object; so, it is argued, faith is here put for the righteousness of Christ, which is the object of faith; and the meaning of the verse, according to this interpretation, is that faith, that is its object, the righteousness of Christ, was imputed to Abraham, as his justifying righteousness.

According to the other interpretation, which is perhaps the more natural, the meaning of the verse is, that faith is counted for righteousness, or unto righteousness, that is justification, as being the divinely appointed instrument of receiving justification; it is not the justifying righteousness itself, but the means of obtaining it. In this sense it is Abraham's faith itself that is imputed to him, or reckoned as his. God sees and acknowledges the faith of His servant,—that it is sincere and genuine; He therefore imputes it to him unto justification,—He grants him an interest in that righteousness which is annexed to faith, and which alone justifies the sinner. It is not as a meri-

torious cause, but as an instrument, that faith is imputed to Abraham unto righteousness—*unto*, that is, as a means of obtaining, righteousness or justification. When, then, faith is reckoned for righteousness, this result arises not from any merit in faith itself, but merely because it brings us in connexion with Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Faith, then, does not justify us as a work. In whatever sense it is the cause of our justification, it cannot possibly be the meritorious cause. Faith, in itself, has no more merit than any other grace; believing is not more meritorious than doing. Faith is indeed a virtue of pre-eminent excellence,—it is accompanied by other virtues—yea, it is the root of all other virtues,—it brings a man into a right state of mind, into a state of dependence on God; but still, it is in itself imperfect, and attended with much sin, and therefore can never be that perfect righteousness which God requires: "it is our sanctification, but not our justification."*

But although faith cannot justify us meri-

* See Wardlaw on Assurance, p. 49.

toriously, yet it justifies us instrumentally. We are not justified *for* our faith, but *by* our faith. Faith is the instrument by which we appropriate to ourselves the blessings of the Gospel; it is that principle which receives Christ, and rests on Him alone for salvation. It is that vital bond which unites us unto Christ, so that we are legally considered one with Him, in virtue of which, what is His is reckoned to us—His sufferings are put in the place of our sufferings, His obedience in the place of our obedience—and, therefore, by faith we are justified for the sake of His righteousness. "By grace," says the apostle, "are ye saved through faith." Grace, free and unmerited, is the source of our salvation; but faith is that which accepts the free offers of the Gospel. It is the method by which we partake of the benefits of the covenant of grace, not the benefits themselves; it is not our justifying righteousness, but that principle which receives it and makes it ours; it is the empty hand stretched forth, not to give but to receive.

Faith, then, may, in an obvious sense, be called the condition of our justification,—that

which on our part must be performed before we can receive the benefits of redemption,—the prerequisite to our salvation. If we possess it, we are justified; if we are destitute of it, we are condemned. Christ has suffered in our room and stead; He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; He has wrought out for us a perfect righteousness, by reason of which our sins may be pardoned, and our persons accepted as righteous in the sight of God. But then, before we can receive these blessings, we must have faith; according to the unalterable decree of God, they are promised to such, and to such only, as believe. "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." In this sense, then, faith is the condition of our justification: it is not merely essential to our justification, a *sine qua non*, that without which we cannot be justified, as many other things are; but it alone, of all graces, takes a part in our justification, being the divinely appointed instrument by which we are justified. And yet we must be careful, when we use the word condition, that we do not mean thereby a meritorious condition, as if God should bestow justification

upon us as a reward of our faith. In this sense, neither faith nor anything else, but the merits of Christ is the condition of our salvation; this is the only ground of our acceptance with God, the only righteousness which justifies the sinner.

Faith's being, in the above sense, as a receptive instrument, the condition of our justification does not give any merit to it, or lessen the freeness of the Gospel salvation. It does not detract in the slightest degree from the free grace of God. For what is this condition? It is the condition that a beggar must stretch forth his hands to receive the alms that are offered him; that a prisoner, when his chains are knocked off and his prison door thrown open, must walk out of prison; that a rebel, on the proclamation of a free pardon to those who submit, must throw down the weapons of his rebellion. Faith, as an instrument, does nothing more; it is the hand of the soul which receives those things which are freely given it of God. The blessings of the Gospel are not forced upon our acceptance; God deals with us as free agents and morally accountable creatures; they are offered to us,

and it is by faith that we accept them, and by unbelief that we reject them.

Faith is the only instrument of our justification. The Scriptures uniformly assign our justification to it, whilst they give to no other work or grace the same importance. "Knowing," says St. Paul, "that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* All other graces and works are excluded from having any share in our justification; it is by faith to the exclusion of works. What room, then, it will be asked, is left for good works? If a man is justified by faith without works, does it not follow that he can be saved without holiness? By no means. The faith which justifies is such a faith as leads a man to act according as he believes; it is a principle which by touching the heart influences the conduct; it implies a disposition of mind corresponding to the assent which is given; it is a faith which worketh by love.

* Gal. ii. 16.

Hence, then, justifying faith is always accompanied by good works; these are its appropriate fruits, its proper evidences, its necessary effects. "It is," says the venerable Hooker, "a childish cavil our adversaries use, exclaiming that we require nothing in Christians but faith, because we say faith alone justifies. Whereas, by this speech, we never meant to exclude hope or charity from being always joined, and inseparable mates with faith, in the man justified; or works from being added, and necessary duties required of every justified man; but to show that faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ unto justification, and Christ the only garment which being put on hides the imperfections of our works, makes us blameless in the sight of God, before whom otherwise the weakness of our faith were sufficient to shut us out of heaven."*

From this we may see the connexion between faith and love in our justification. "Faith worketh by love." These two graces are much extolled in Scripture,—the one as the instrument of salvation, the other as the design of salvation. "God," says the apostle, "hath chosen us in Christ before the founda-

* Hooker's *Discourse on Justification*, sec. 31.

tion of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love."* Faith is the means of our salvation—that which puts us in a saved condition—that which rescues us from hell, and gives us a title to heaven; whereas love is the ultimate end of salvation, that which faith itself seeks to accomplish. Faith is the root by which the tree of Christian profession takes firm hold of the soil, and receives nourishment; and the produce which it bears are the fruits of love, pleasing to God and full of benefit to man. "To many," says that profound thinker, Coleridge, "to myself formerly, it appeared a mere dispute about words (whether faith justifies as an instrument, or as a disposition perfected by love); but it is by no means of so harmless a character, for it tends to give a false direction to our thoughts by diverting conscience from the ruined and corrupt state in which we are without Christ. Sin is the disease. What is the remedy? Charity? Charity, in the larger apostolic sense of the term, is the health, the state to be obtained by the use of the remedy, not the sovereign

* Eph. i. 4.

balm itself. Faith of grace? Faith in the God-manhood, the cross, the mediation, the perfect righteousness of Jesus, to the utter rejection and abjuration of all righteousness of our own? Faith alone is the restorative. The Romish doctrine is preposterous; it puts the rill before the spring. Faith is the source; charity, that is the whole Christian life, is the stream from it. It is quite childish to talk of faith being imperfect without charity; as wisely might you say that a fire, however bright or strong, was imperfect without heat; or that the sun, however cloudless, is imperfect without beams. The true answer would be:—it is not faith, but reprobate faithlessness."

Such, then, is the manner in which faith justifies. It does not justify meritoriously as if it were our justifying righteousness; but instrumentally as that which receives and appropriates the righteousness of Christ. Without it there can be no justification. A beggar is not relieved unless he receives the bounty of his benefactor; so neither is the sinner justified unless by faith he receives the righteousness of Christ; it is "a righteousness which is unto all, and upon all them that believe."

II.—THE REASONS WHY JUSTIFICATION IS ASCRIBED TO FAITH.

The reasons why justification is ascribed to faith are, it is admitted, not distinctly laid down in Scripture; and it would be sufficient to refer this to the appointment of God. We are justified by faith, because God has willed that so it should be. It is to our reception of the Gospel testimony that he has annexed our salvation; and a testimony can only be received as it is believed. But although we cannot tell all the reasons why our justification should be by faith; yet there are circumstances connected with this method of justification which appear to demonstrate if not its necessity, at least its wisdom.

1. The doctrine of justification by faith *proves that it is of grace.* This is a reason which the apostle himself assigns, and is, therefore, in all probability, the principal reason: "It is of faith that it might be by grace."* Salvation is uniformly described to be the result of unmerited and sovereign love; and there is nothing that the sacred writers

* Rom. iv. 16.

appear more anxious to exclude from all share in our salvation, than any works or righteousness of our own. In ourselves, we deserve nothing at the hands of God but punishment; there was nothing in us or about us to draw forth His love, but everything to excite His righteous indignation. It was His love for our souls, His compassion for our miseries, His mere mercy, that caused Him to send His Son into the world to make an atonement for our sins. This is the only reason why any of the children of men are finally saved. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."* And as grace is the great reason why any are finally saved; so grace pervades all the parts of this salvation, and especially is our justification ascribed to it. "Being justified,"

* Eph. i. 5-8.

says the apostle, "freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." * Now, if our justification were attached to our sincere, though imperfect obedience; or if it were ascribed to any other Christian virtue, as love or repentance; it would be, in part at least, a matter not of favour, but of debt due to our works; because, while these graces "have an intrinsic merit, something independent of any object foreign to themselves, which might be regarded as the ground of our acceptance, faith in Christ, by its very nature, looks beyond itself, and instead of presenting anything of which the person who believes can boast, implies a reliance upon the merits of another."† Faith is a confession of poverty, a declaration of utter helplessness, self-renunciation, and confidence in another. It leaves, then, the doctrine of free grace in all its purity, and excludes all personal boasting and glory in the matter of salvation. "Men," says Davenant, "are justified by that method by which the divine glory is most illustrated, and the honour of our salvation referred to God alone. But those who deter-

* Rom. iii. 24. † See Hill's Lectures, vol. iii. p. 234.

mine that man is justified by any virtues or works, in the matter of justification, they do not leave the glory of man's salvation entirely with God, but ascribe it, in some part, to their own merit. But, as we are accustomed to ascribe the whole glory of alms promised and given, not to the beggar receiving them, but to the donor freely bestowing them, so we assign the whole glory of man's justification and salvation, not to faith tending towards Christ, and attaching Him to itself, but to God himself, gratuitously justifying the believer."*

2. The doctrine of justification by faith *magnifies the work of Christ.* As a general rule, that doctrine is the most scriptural, which ascribes the greatest honour and glory to Christ the Saviour. Whilst we are forbidden to glory in ourselves or in man, we are commanded to glory in Christ. "Of Him," says the apostle, "are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according as it is written, He that glorieth,

* Davenant's *Disputatio de Justitia*, translated by Allport, vol. ii., p. 410.

let him glory in the Lord."* Now, by assigning our justification only to faith, we are thus led to look to Christ for everything; for what is faith but a reliance on the Saviour? He it was, we are thus taught, who delivered us from condemnation, and redeemed us from the curse of the law; who, by His meritorious sufferings, has procured for us the forgiveness of sins, and by His perfect obedience, has merited righteousness whereby we are justified. To Him we repair by faith, on Him alone we trust, and through Him we seek to be accepted. Faith leads us to depend upon Christ for everything; to go forward in our Christian course relying upon His strength, so that it is because He lives that we live also. Thus we are taught that our salvation from first to last is due to Christ. He alone has the glory of rescuing sinners from guilt and ruin, and of raising them to honour and happiness. By His blood He procured the remedy; by His mediation He applies it; and with regard to justification, His righteousness alone is the cause of our acceptance with God. And thus the redeemed shall throughout

* 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

eternal ages ascribe their salvation to Christ; they owe Him all that they possess; the robes with which they are clothed, were washed and made white in His blood; the crowns which they wear, were by Him bestowed; the inheritance which they possess, was purchased by His merits; the mansions which they inhabit, were by Him prepared; the eternal life which they enjoy, was His own free gift; and in token of their gratitude, and of the obligations under which they are to Him, they cast their crowns before His throne, saying: "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

3. The doctrine of justification by faith *is well fitted to produce gratitude and humility in man.*

Such a view of the subject, evidently gives occasion to gratitude. The greater the benefit, the stronger are the reasons for gratitude. Now, justification by faith, being a plan of free grace on the part of God, without any consideration of merit on our part, the strongest inducements to gratitude are presented.

The language of the justified man is that of the Psalmist: "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits?" Nor is this emotion restricted to time, it will extend throughout eternity, and will form a chief cause of that delightful communion which shall subsist between the redeemed and their Saviour. But, on the contrary, if salvation were due in any degree to our works, it would lessen proportionably our obligations to Christ, and consequently, the intensity of our gratitude. In the same degree that our salvation is due to our works, it is a matter of debt and not of grace, and therefore cannot give rise to those feelings of gratitude which are excited by a free gift. It is the mercy of God, and not His justice, which principally excites our love.

But whilst this doctrine produces gratitude, it is no less fitted to inspire us with humility. We need not dwell upon this, as we have already had occasion to advert to it in a former chapter. If man were justified by works, he would have whereof to glory. But this method of justification by faith, without works, takes away from man all ground of

boasting, and ascribes the merit of his salvation entirely to another. Besides, as we have already observed, faith necessarily leads a man to renounce all dependence on his own efforts, to give up all hopes of salvation, either in whole or in part, arising from his own righteousness, to judge and condemn himself for his guilt, and to abase himself in the dust before God. "Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith." And thus it is solemnly declared that no flesh shall glory in His presence.

4. Another, and probably one of the chief reasons why justification is ascribed to faith seems to be that *our forgiveness is thus inseparably connected with our holiness;* that which is necessary to our justification, has a direct and natural tendency to produce our sanctification. We are not saved by reason of our holiness; our own righteousness is imperfect, and therefore can never justify us before God; but still it is no less true that "without holiness no one can see the Lord." There is no room left for boasting, but there is abundant provision made for good works. We do not

enter upon the connexion between faith and holiness; this is so important, that we reserve it as the subject of a following chapter. At present, we would only remark that faith is not only a Christian virtue, but a virtue of a superior order; a virtue which is always accompanied by other virtues; it implies confidence in God's character, resignation to His will, humility of mind, and a sincere desire to know the truth. It brings the sinner into a state of filial trust and holy love toward God. In short, the life of a Christian is nothing else but a life of faith. "The just shall live by faith." "We walk by faith, not by sight." "While," observes Dr. Dwight, "this scheme of justification strips man of all pretensions to merit, and gives the whole glory of his salvation to his Maker, it furnishes the most efficacious means, and the most absolute assurance of his future obedience, his perpetual improvement in holiness, and his certain advancement toward the best character which he will ever be capable of sustaining. The obedience springing from faith, is voluntary, filial, and lovely; whilst all other obedience is mercenary, and of no moral worth."

5. The doctrine of justification by faith *affords the greatest encouragement to the penitent sinner.* It is this alone that can effectually speak peace to the awakened sinner; this is the only sure remedy for a troubled conscience. Tell a sin-burdened man that he must forsake his sins, and perform the works of righteousness in order to please God, and before he can be accepted by Him: he will answer you that he has endeavoured to do this, but has failed. Tell a dying man that his salvation is dependent upon his obedience, and you will only increase his terrors, and drive him to despair. But speak of the blood of Jesus—point to Him who died for them—discourse on that faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,—proclaim the infinite love, and mercy, and grace of our God, to a lost and ruined world, and you inspire those who are ready to perish with hope, you comfort those who mourn in Sion, you pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit, and you bind up the broken-hearted. Whereas the opposite doctrine can afford no sure grounds of hope and

encouragement to the awakened and the penitent. If our justification were attached, not to our faith, but to our works, then all might well despair of salvation. Even although it were only imperfect obedience that was required of us, yet who could know that he possessed that measure of obedience sufficient for justification? And from what virtuous principle could such obedience flow? Not from love to God, the only foundation of all true virtue; because we could not possibly tell the inclination of God toward us, whether He were our friend or our enemy, and where this is not known, there can be no true confidence, and where there is no confidence there can be no love. It is from the knowledge that there is free pardon with God, that all true obedience and love arise. "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared."

The security of all true believers flows from this doctrine as an obvious consequence. Their security depends not upon the perfection of their obedience, the intensity of their repentance, or the magnitude of their good works; but on the merits and right-

eousness of Christ. Faith is the condition required of us in order to be partakers of the benefits of redemption; and this condition all believers have fulfilled. They have accepted Christ as their Saviour, committed their souls to His care, and put their entire trust upon His finished work. Thus believing on the Son, they are justified before God. The law has nothing to say against them; for all its demands are satisfied, and they are no longer under the law but under grace. The justice of God is no longer opposed to their forgiveness; for Christ has suffered for sin, so that God may be just and yet the justifier of those who believe. Their spiritual enemies cannot finally prevail against them; for their Redeemer is mighty, and able to make them more than conquerors. And thus relying upon the merits of their Saviour, and trusting to His grace, they are enabled to triumph over all their doubts, and fears, and enemies, and to unite in the exulting language of the apostle: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how

shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But, on the other hand, if faith is the only instrument of justification, how perilous is the condition of unbelievers. They have neither part nor lot in the covenant of redemption; for they have failed to fulfil its condition. Their sins are unpardoned; for they have made no personal application to the Saviour. They are under the curse of a broken law,

and liable to that fearful punishment which is the penalty of transgression; for they have not believed on Christ that they might be justified. Let us, then, seriously meditate on the tremendous consequences which are suspended on faith—consequences which involve our eternal destinies—our immortal happiness or woe. We are fast hastening to the eternal world, where those great realities which are now the objects of faith, will be the objects of sight. It is but a thin veil which conceals these realities from our view,—it is but a narrow line which separates us from them. A few years, it may be a few days, shall pass over our heads, and we shall find ourselves in another world, where our final condition will be permanently fixed.

CHAPTER VII.

HARMONY OF THE VIEWS OF PAUL AND JAMES.

We trust we have sufficiently proved, in our previous chapters, that according to the doctrine of the apostle Paul, good works or personal righteousness have no share whatever in our justification before God. They are not the ground or meritorious cause, for that is the righteousness of Christ; neither are they the instrumental cause, for that is faith.

Here, however, we are met with a notable objection, arising from the different views which the apostles Paul and James take, or appear to take, of justification. These two apostles seem at variance with one another in their statements of this great doctrine,—the one referring it wholly to our faith; the other partly to our faith, and partly to our works. Paul declares, as the conclusion of a long and irresistible argument, "that a man is justified

by faith without the deeds of the law;"* whereas James, in terms which seem directly opposed to this declaration, affirms that "by works a man is justified and not by faith only." † The one seems to exclude works altogether, either in whole or in part, as the ground or meritorious cause of our justification; the other appears to assert that works are as essential to our justification as faith. In short, these two apostles appear to be establishing two opposite doctrines—the one the doctrine of free grace, the other the doctrine of meritorious obedience—the one justification by faith, the other justification by works;—the one seems to refer our salvation wholly to the righteousness of Christ, the other, in part at least, to our own works.

Accordingly, various schemes have been adopted to reconcile this apparent discrepancy. These schemes differ according to the different meanings attached to the three principal terms employed, — justification, faith, and works. One class of divines suppose that the apostles speak of two different kinds of justification; but in this class there is a great variety of

* Rom. iii. 28. † James ii. 24.

opinion. Some of them suppose that Paul speaks of justification by faith in the sight of God, whilst James speaks of justification by works in the sight of man; the one referring to the justification of our persons, the other to the justification of our faith. Others suppose that Paul speaks of justification, properly so called, and James of the manifestation or proof of that justification. And others that Paul speaks of first justification, or that which is begun, which as they say is by faith alone; while James speaks of second justification, or that which is completed, which they affirm to be by those works which spring from faith. A second class of divines think that the justification about which the apostles discourse is the same, but that the faith is different,—that Paul speaks of faith as an active practical principle, the belief of the heart; while James speaks of a speculative faith, the mere assent of the understanding. A third class of divines suppose that both the justification and the faith about which the apostles discourse, are the same, but that the works are different—some considering that Paul speaks of works wrought in obedience to the law of Moses,

while James speaks of works done in obedience to the moral law; and others thinking that Paul speaks of works done in a state of nature, and James of works done in a state of grace. And a fourth class of divines teach exactly the reverse, that the works are the same, but that both the justification and faith are different—that Paul speaks of justification in the sight of God and of genuine faith, while James speaks of the manifestation of our justification and of spurious faith. Some have endeavoured to interpret Paul by the language of James, and suppose that a legal or meritorious righteousness is the true doctrine of Scripture on this subject; while others, erring in the other extreme, have forced James into an agreement with Paul, and have asserted that works have not the slightest influence in our salvation. In short, an innumerable number of expedients have been adopted; and, as is generally the case in such matters, men have gone to the one extreme or to the other, according to their preconceived opinions; they have too frequently come to the study of the subject with prejudices, instead of calmly and deliberately con-

sidering the general scope of the discourses of these apostles, and the nature and meaning of the terms which they employ. It is not to be denied that the subject is attended with difficulty, as indeed is evident from the variety of opinions which have been formed on it; but we trust to be able to remove some of the difficulties which beset it, and to prove that, instead of there being any contradiction, there is a perfect harmony between the different statements of these two apostles.

Two different and equally dangerous errors have arisen from contradictory views of the doctrine of justification,—the one such a view of the doctrines of grace as destroys the necessity of holiness; and the other the converse, such a view of the value of good works as destroys the notion of grace. One class, by perverting the doctrine of St. Paul, think they will be saved merely by believing the Gospel, however sinful their lives may be,—that they are under a system of grace, and delivered, in part at least, from the law as a rule of obedience. They accordingly constantly magnify the free grace of God, while they think lightly of the practice of virtue, and contemptuously

term the enforcement of the precepts of the Gospel legal preaching. Now, against such a view of the subject, we would bring the statement of St. James, "that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Another class, by perverting the doctrine of St. James, think that they can merit salvation by their own works, and that holiness is not merely the effect, but the meritorious cause of justification. They accordingly pride themselves on the consistency of their moral conduct, and thus, like the Jews of old, go about to establish a righteousness of their own. Now, against such a view of the subject, we would bring the statement of St. Paul, that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Both errors are equally dangerous to salvation; for if it be true, as Scripture and unprejudiced reason assert, that "without holiness none can see the Lord," then such as are destitute of it, however much they may speak of their faith, must be excluded from heaven; and if, on the other hand, it be equally true that "he who believeth not shall be damned," then such as have never come to the Saviour and placed their trust on Him for salvation, however

moral their external conduct may be, are yet in their sins. And we trust it will evidently appear as we proceed that neither of these two errors derives any countenance, either from the doctrine of St. Paul, or from that of St. James.

This chapter, then, is devoted to a removal of the apparent contradiction, and to the consideration of the real harmony which subsists between the different statements of Paul and James concerning justification. That such a harmony does exist is admitted by all who recognise the writings of both of these apostles as inspired portions of the Word of God. However apparent the difference between them, however opposite their statements may seem to be, yet it is allowed that there is no real contradiction,—that the difference lies only in their words, but not in their meaning,—that a reconciling principle of interpretation does exist. It is also admitted on all hands that the meanings of these apostles are not to be sought for only by a regard to single words or detached phrases, but chiefly by a careful consideration of the general scope of their discourses, and their professed designs

in writing their epistles. And farther, as we have already fully demonstrated that Paul excludes works altogether from having any share in our justification, and as he writes most fully upon this doctrine, and James briefly and only as it were incidentally, we shall not repeat at any length what has already been advanced on that part of the subject. Paul asserts, in terms as plain as can possibly be conceived, that we are not justified before God by works, and, therefore, to say that we are thus justified is not to explain, but to contradict that apostle.

These things being premised, we would now enter upon a more minute consideration of the subject, and would endeavour to make manifest:—*First*, that these apostles have different designs in their discourses; *secondly*, that they speak of different faiths,—Paul of that which is real and genuine, James of that which is nominal and spurious; and *thirdly*, that whereas Paul speaks of our justification before God, James alludes rather to the manifestation or evidence of that justification.

I. The apostles Paul and James have different designs in their discourses.

The design of Paul in his epistle to the Romans, as also in that to the Galatians, is to show how a guilty sinner, condemned by the law, might be justified before God. He is arguing against those self-righteous persons who said that justification came by works. These men made their boast of the law, and looked upon their obedience to it as the ground of their acceptance with God. And by the law, as we have formerly proved, the apostle does not mean, as some suppose, the ceremonial law of the Jews, but the law of God in general, and in particular the moral law which was written in the hearts of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, and obedience to which was demanded from the whole world. Now, the apostle asserts that the only ground of justification by the law is perfect obedience. Its language is,—The man that doeth these things shall live in them; but the soul that sinneth it shall die. But all men are sinners, and therefore the law, instead of justifying, passes sentence of condemnation against them. On this ground, the apostle affirms that, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified before God." He then explains the

method of justification which God has revealed through the righteousness of Christ, and which righteousness is bestowed on all who believe. Hence, then, the apostle asserts that a man is justified only by faith, and not by works. "Therefore," says he, "we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law." But, then, it must be borne in mind that by faith the apostle does not mean a mere passive assent of the understanding to the truths of the Gospel, but an active belief in them,—such a faith as will produce a reliance upon Christ, and lead a man to act as he believes,—a faith which, as he elsewhere informs us, "works by love."* Although, then, Paul excludes works altogether, either in whole or in part, as the ground of our justification, yet the faith to which he ascribes it is an active faith, and is asserted by him to be always accompanied by good works.

The design of James in his epistle is very different. Those to whom he writes were professed believers, who, presuming that they were already justified, were indifferent about their moral conduct. They either perverted

* Gal. v. 6.

the doctrine of St. Paul, or else, as is more probable, were led astray by their own corrupt passions, so that they overlooked the connexion which subsists between genuine faith and good works. Because we are justified without works, they concluded that they might be saved without holiness. Hence, as a natural consequence, they believed that they were released by the Gospel from obedience to the law. The question, then, which St. James discusses, is not whether a man is justified partly by works and partly by faith, but whether a man who professes to be justified by faith, but whose faith is unaccompanied by works, is really in a justified state. "What doth it profit though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" or, as it might be rendered, "can this faith save him?"* Is a mere general, unmeaning assent to the doctrines of the Gospel, a formal profession of Christianity, true faith,—that faith which justifies a man? This is the question propounded; and the apostle decides it in the negative,—that a faith unaccompanied by works is spurious,

* James ii. 14.

and that a man who possesses such a faith, and yet thinks that thereby he is justified, deceives his own soul, imposes upon himself in supposing that he has true faith, when in reality he is destitute of it. Faith alone justifies the sinner, but it must be true faith, a faith which is proved, or rather proves itself, to be genuine by good works. And, therefore, the apostle draws his argument to a conclusion in these words: "Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

From this it appears, that the designs of these two apostles are very different. Paul discourses how a guilty sinner may be justified before God: James teaches that no man living in sin can be justified whatever his profession may be. Paul answers the question of the awakened sinner, What must I do to be saved? James exhorts professed believers to walk worthy of their calling. Hence, as Dr. Owen observes, "The principal designs of the two apostles being so distant, there is no repugnancy in their assertions, though their words make an appearance thereof. They do not speak to the same

thing, nor of things in the same respect. James doth not once inquire how a guilty convinced sinner, cast and condemned by the law, may come to be justified before God; and Paul speaks to nothing else. Wherefore apply the expressions of each of them unto their proper design and scope, as we must do, or we depart from all sober rules of interpretation, and render it impossible to understand either of them aright, and there is no disagreement, or appearance of it, between them."

II. From what has been said, it will evidently appear that these apostles speak of different faiths,—so that when Paul says, a man is justified by faith without works, he intends real, genuine faith; and when James says a man is justified by works, and not by faith only, he intends nominal, spurious faith.

That when Paul speaks of being justified by faith, he means genuine saving faith is admitted by all. This faith to which he ascribes justification, is represented by him as an active practical principle—a faith which not only supposes the assent of the understanding to the revelation of the Gospel, but an acting upon that assent,—in short a reception of the

Gospel—an exercise of the will as well as of the understanding. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness."* "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."† True faith is such a deep and abiding impression of revealed truths upon the mind, as leads a man to act according as he believes. It is always accompanied by good works; it is the source of all evangelical obedience. And hence, in the very same passage in which this apostle excludes works from having any concern whatever in our justification, he at the same time asserts their importance and indispensable obligations. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."‡ And the writings of Paul abound with precepts, addressed to those who believe, thus connecting the faith which justifies with obedience to the law of God. "This," says

* Rom. x. 10. † Gal. v. 6. ‡ Eph. ii. 8-10.

he, writing to Titus, "is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."* It is by this faith—this active working faith—ever accompanied by works, that Paul says we are justified; and in this he is perfectly at one with James, who lays great stress upon good works as the inseparable accompaniments of saving faith.

The faith about which the apostle James discourses, and which he asserts cannot justify, is a very different faith from that mentioned by Paul—it is a spurious faith, a mere formal assent to the truths of the Gospel, a lifeless inoperative principle. Such a faith it is very possible for a man to have; a man may render a mere formal, unmeaning assent to the truths of the Gospel, without these truths asserting any influence over his heart or conduct. And that it is to this faith that the apostle James alludes, is evident from his whole discourse. He compares such a faith to an inactive, worthless principle, which expends itself in good words and kind wishes,

* Tit. iii. 8.

but never proceeds to action. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can *this* faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone." * As this love is of no value, so neither is the faith of him who professes to believe the Gospel, and yet walks not up to his profession. The apostle compares such a faith with that which the devils possess. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"† It is, then, a dead and unprofitable faith of which this apostle speaks—the mere semblance of genuine faith—which has the name, but not the nature of faith; and it is just because it is thus dead and fruitless, that the apostle says it cannot justify. It is, then, this spurious kind of faith that James asserts

* James ii. 14-17. † James ii. 19, 20.

to be incapable of justifying or saving a person; and in this he is perfectly at one with Paul, who asserts the same truth in words precisely similar: "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

The apostles, then, speak of different faiths, so that although the one says we are justified by faith only, and the other asserts that we are not justified by faith alone, yet there is no contradiction between them, as they use the term faith in different senses. Paul speaks of a faith which worketh by love; James of a faith which is destitute of love. Paul speaks of a living faith, by which the justified man lives; James of a dead faith, even as the body without the spirit is dead. In short, Paul speaks of a faith ever accompanied by works; James of a faith without works. The faith whereof the one treats is that of the true believer; the faith whereof the other discourses is that of the nominal professor.

III. Further, whereas Paul speaks of our justification before God, James alludes rather to the manifestation or evidence of that justification.

The term justification, as we have already proved, signifies in Scripture a manifestation or declaration of righteousness. But this declaration of righteousness may be made before God or before man; it may refer to our being declared justified by God, or our being declared justified before the church or the world. Now it is evident that Paul alludes to our justification in the sight of God; if he adverts to the manifestation of our justification, it is only incidentally. James, on the contrary, treats rather of the manifestation or evidence of our justification—how we may prove that we are in a justified state, either to our own consciences, or to our fellow men; and how otherwise our justification can be manifested except by works, it is not possible to conceive. In the words of Dr. Bennet: "The justification of which Paul speaks, is that of a sinner before God. James speaks of the justification of a professed believer before men. Paul therefore says his justification is by faith, without works; James says that his justification is by works, which are to prove that faith exists. Paul treats only of justification at the tribunal of Him that can

see our faith; James speaks of a tribunal at which our faith cannot be seen, unless we show it by works. Paul's justification is before the Omniscient, by a principle invisible to men, which therefore must produce works to justify us before the church and the world; James treats of this last justification by those very works which are to prove we had the living faith."*

Good works are the only proper manifestations and evidences of faith. If, then, our faith is to be proved to be genuine,—if our justification is to be manifest, it must be by works. "A man," says St. James, "may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."† A faith without works is incapable of being proved: "to shew faith without works" is an impossibility: if it exist at all in this state, it exists in a passive or latent form in a man's own mind, and cannot be shown to others. As, then, life is known by action, so is faith known by works; for, as the apostle says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without

* Bennet on Justification, p 177. † James ii. 18.

works is dead also." Faith being an active principle, if there is no spiritual action it is a proof that faith does not exist, or, at least, there is no evidence of its existence. Not that good works constitute true faith, but they prove its existence; even as good fruits do not make a tree good, but prove it to be so. "A good tree bringeth forth good fruits." "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things." Although, then, good works must always follow after justifying faith, yet they are the only evidences by which it can be known that we are in a justified state; they are the fruits of the Spirit, the evidences of grace in the soul. And it is on this that the apostle James so strongly insists, that as we are justified by our faith, so we must justify our faith by our works. It is by these, and these alone, that we can arrive at any satisfactory conclusion as to the safety of our condition. If we think that we have faith, merely because we give a formal assent to the Gospel, and do not produce in our lives the fruits of Christianity, we deceive ourselves, for the faith is not in us. And hence the apostle Peter, when he exhorts Christians to

give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, enjoins them to do so in no other way than by adding to their faith all the other virtues of the Christian character.* God knows certainly whether we are in a justified state, but we can only know so through the medium of our good works. God sees the effects in the cause, but we can only judge of the cause by its effects. A man is justified before God by his faith; a man can only know that he is thus justified by his works.

The harmony subsisting between the two apostles will be still more clearly apprehended if we attend to the example of the justification of Abraham, which both produce as illustrating their respective statements; and this the more so as, in this example, the apparent difference between them is conspicuous. Paul says: "What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh

* 2 Peter i. 5-10.

is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." * Whereas James says: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." †

Here there is, on the first view of the subject, an apparent contradiction between these two statements. Paul seems to ascribe Abraham's justification to his faith, whereas James seems to ascribe it to his works. A little attention, however, will show that the contradiction is only apparent, whilst the harmony is real. It is to be observed, from a comparison of these passages with the history of Abraham, as recorded by Moses, that the

* Rom. iv. 1-5. † James ii. 21-24.

time, when it was testified of him that his faith was counted unto him for righteousness, was more than twenty years before his offering up Isaac:* it was whilst he was in uncircumcision, a circumstance of which Paul takes notice. "Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised."† And upwards of twenty years after, he was called to give that noble testimony of his faith by the offering up of Isaac. In what sense, then, was he justified when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? It was not before God, for he was already thus justified,—righteousness was already imputed to him. But he thereby evidently manifested the truth and reality of his justification; he proved his faith to be the genuine faith of the Gospel,—an active principle. His being called to offer up

* Gen. xv. 6. † Rom. iv. 9-11.

Isaac was a great trial of his faith, and therefore his obeying the divine command was a most convincing proof that his faith was the faith which justifies. Faith was the whole operating motive, and the act the mere expression of that motive. "By faith," says St. Paul, "Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son."* And hence God himself owns and acknowledges this eminent act of faith on the part of His servant; and although He knew that Abraham already possessed faith, and so required no proofs of it for himself, yet speaking after the manner of man, He declares: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me."† This, then, is the justification of Abraham whereof St. James speaks,—a justification of the sincerity and reality of his faith,—the manifestation or evidence of his justification before God. "Faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect," or manifested to be perfect. "And," in this sense, "the Scripture was fulfilled," that is,

* Heb. xi. 17. † Gen. xxii. 12.

evidenced to be true, "which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."* Abraham's justification, however, was complete and certain whenever his faith was counted to him for righteousness; and if he had died before an opportunity was given him of obeying the divine command, and of proving the reality of his faith by his works, he would undoubtedly have been saved. Abraham's justification was already past, and therefore his offering up Isaac did not render it more certain, but more evident to himself.

The other instance by which James illustrates his argument, that of Rahab, is precisely similar. "Likewise also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" † It is evident that it was Rahab's faith in the God of Israel which induced her to receive the messengers; indeed she herself gives this as the reason of her conduct; she believed the wonders that God had wrought for His people in Egypt and in the wilderness, and that the land of Canaan would be subdued by the Israelites. "I know that

* James ii. 22, 23. † James ii. 25.

the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath."* Her receiving the messengers, then, and sending them out another way, was a work of faith, and was therefore an evidence that her faith was real or genuine. "By faith," says St. Paul, "the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."† Thus, then, did she manifest the sincerity of her faith. By works was her faith made perfect, it was proved to be genuine; and in this sense she is said to be justified by works.

Thus, then, we trust that we have sufficiently proved that a real harmony exists between the statements of the apostles Paul and James relative to justification,—that although in words these inspired writers seem at variance, yet, by attending to the general scope of their discourses and the different meanings which they attach to the same terms, it will be seen that their sense is the same. Paul's doctrine

* Josh. ii. 9, 11. † Heb. xi. 31.

is, that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law; but then, observe that the faith to which he assigns our justification is an active principle, which works by love. James' doctrine is, that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only; but then, observe that by faith he here means an inactive principle,—a dead faith,—a faith unaccompanied by works,—a faith which even the devils themselves possess. These two apostles, then, in reality assert the same thing,—that a man is justified by faith without works, but that the faith which justifies is ever accompanied by works, as its effects and evidences; the chief difference between them being, that whereas Paul speaks of genuine faith, James speaks of that which is spurious. Between these two views of justification there is no real difference; both ascribe our justification before God to faith, and both assert that the faith which justifies is a faith accompanied by works. In the words of an old divine: "A man is justified by faith alone,"—that is the doctrine of St. Paul; "but not by that faith which is alone,"*—that is the doctrine of St. James.

* Fides sola justificat, sed non quæ est sola.

Such, then, is the true scriptural doctrine of justification. Faith is the only instrument of justification; but justifying faith is always accompanied by good works. If these works be absent, the faith is spurious and of no moral worth. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Whereas, if these works be present, it is a proof that the faith is genuine and saving. "I will show thee my faith by my works." "Both subjects, even faith and works," says Luther, the great champion of the doctrine of justification by faith, "ought to be diligently taught and urged; yet so that each may remain within its own limits. For if works alone are taught, as is the case in the papacy, faith is lost sight of; whereas, if faith alone is taught, immediately carnal men imagine that good works are not necessary."

From what has been said, it evidently appears that the doctrine of justification is equally opposed to each of those two dangerous errors adverted to in the beginning of this chapter,—to self-righteousness on the one hand and to licentiousness on the other. It warns

the self-righteous that we can only be justified by faith, and not by works. It warns the licentious that the faith which justifies is ever productive of good works.

It becomes us, then, to guard against both of these errors. We must guard against self-righteousness. Grace, sovereign, free, and unmerited, is the only cause of our salvation; the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of our justification before God; and all works or righteousness of our own are, in the way of merit, completely excluded. It becomes us, then, to lie low in the dust of self-abasement, —to renounce for ever all dependence on ourselves or on our own merits,—to be filled with a deep sense of our sinfulness and unworthiness,—to judge and condemn ourselves for our guilt,—and, however great our attainments in piety may be, yet humbly and gratefully to acknowledge that it is by the grace of God that we are what we are. "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face."* "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"† "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion

* Dan. ix. 7. † Psalm cxxx. 3.

covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God."*

But whilst we avoid one extreme, we must beware of running into the other; whilst we guard against self-righteousness, we must be equally on our guard against spiritual sloth: we must not only be humble, we must also be active. The faith which justifies is ever productive of good works. Although Christ has died for sin and wrought out a perfect righteousness for us, whereby we may be justified, yet it ever shall continue to be true that the holy shall be saved, whilst the unholy shall perish. If we be true believers, our practice will in some degree correspond with our faith; for true faith, wherever it exists, must operate. It is greatly to be feared, or, rather, it is a lamentable truth, that there are many in this Christian land who are Christians in name only,—men who have given their assent to the truths of revelation without much thought about the matter,—who are Christians, because they happened to be born so,—who have a name to live, whilst in reality they are dead. Now, such men are not true believers,

* Jer. iii. 25.

—they have neither studied nor embraced the Gospel,—their faith is spurious,—that faith concerning which St. James discourses, and which justifies not. A man may say that he has faith; but his merely asserting it does not prove that he possesses it: the question is, Where are its fruits, its evidences, its appropriate effects? Show us your faith by your works; prove that you are Christians by a holy life; demonstrate the reality of your faith by acting upon it; work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

"Show me thy faith by thy works," this is the test whereby we are to try the reality of our faith, and this is the test whereby we shall be examined at the day of judgment. What horror will seize upon nominal Christians, when they find themselves judged, not according to their faith, but according to their works—when it shall be demanded whether they have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and ministered to the wants of the unhappy? How will it increase the miseries of perdition, to discover that their whole lives have been but one scene of self-deception, that their faith was spurious, and

their profession insincere? And with what anguish will they behold these words, written as with a sunbeam over the gate of heaven: "Without holiness no man can see the Lord."

"There is," says Masillon, "an unbelief of the heart equally dangerous to salvation as that of the mind. A man who obstinately refuses belief, after all the proofs of religion, is a monster whom we contemplate with horror; but a Christian who believes, and yet lives as though he believed not, is a madman, whose folly surpasseth comprehension; the one procures his condemnation, like a man desperate; the other carelessly allows himself to be carried down by the waves, and thinks that he is thereby saving himself. Make your faith then certain by your good works; and if you shudder at the very name of an infidel, have the same horror at yourselves, seeing we are taught by faith that the destiny of the wicked Christian shall not be different from his, and that his lot shall be the same as that of the unbeliever. Live conformably to what you believe. Such is the faith of the righteous, and the only one to which the eternal promises have been made."

CHAPTER VIII.

CONNEXION BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND HOLINESS.

In our last chapter we considered the objection arising from the apparent difference in the statements of the apostles Paul and James. There is yet another objection against the doctrine of justification by faith without works, frequently insisted upon, namely, that it is prejudicial to the interests of true holiness. Personal obedience is here excluded, and instead of it, faith is substituted; man's own righteousness is asserted to be of no avail to procure for him pardon; and he is declared to be accepted only by the imputation of the righteousness of another. Where, it is asked, is the connexion between this view of justification and the precepts of the Gospel? If a man is justified by faith without works, does it not follow as a legitimate consequence, that he can be saved without holiness? What

provision is there here left for good works? If pardon be procured on so easy terms, does not this lessen the motives to obedience, and hold out an encouragement to sin? How can the law retain its authority, when it is deprived, as regards believers, of its penalty?

The objection is as old as the days of the apostles. It was made against the doctrine of Paul himself, or, at least, his doctrine was thus perverted; and that apostle, in several places, takes notice of it. "Do we," says he, "make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."* The objection is, that the doctrine of justification by faith renders the law useless as a rule of obedience; the answer of the apostle is that, so far is this from being the case, it establishes the law on a firmer foundation than ever. And again: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" This was the inference which some drew from his doctrine, that it was an encouragement to sin; an inference which the apostle rejects with horror. "God forbid: How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein."† And it

* Rom. iii. 31. † Rom. vi. 1, 2.

may here be observed, that the apostle does not answer this objection by saying that the objectors mistook his doctrine, and that when he excluded works from having any share in our justification, he meant only legal works, but not works done in a state of grace; but he grounds the necessity of holiness on other considerations, and enforces it by other motives.

The doctrine contained in the above objection, that justification by faith lessens the motives to obedience, is held by two very different classes of professing Christians. The one, the Antinomians, holding the doctrine of justification by faith, argue from thence the inutility of good works, since, they say, men are saved without them. The other, the Romanists, proceeding from the assumption that holiness is the essential thing, argue from thence that the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith only is false, because, as they affirm, it lessens the obligations or motives to obedience. Both agree in holding that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, has a tendency to diminish our obligations to holiness; but whereas the former class consider

this no objection to the doctrine, but a part of the Gospel plan, the latter bring it forward as a direct objection to the Protestant view of justification.

The Antinomians hold that the law is actually made void by faith; that believers are delivered from it as a rule of obedience; that works have no influence or place whatever in our salvation; and that men are saved merely by believing the Gospel, although destitute of holiness. There are many professing Christians who appear to act practically upon these views; men who seem to think that it matters not what their lives may be provided they believe the Gospel; who, although worldly and often immoral in their conduct, yet trust that the righteousness of Christ will cover all their defects. These men turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and take encouragement to sin because grace abounds. They pervert the meaning of the apostle to their own destruction. He, indeed, declares that believers are not under the law, but under grace; but it is evident from the connexion, that he does not mean that believers are not under the law as a rule of obe-

dience, but that they are freed from the condemning sentence of the law; for in the very next verse he says: "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."* A milder form of Antinomianism is seen in the views of those who, although they do not actually assert that they are absolved from all obligation to obey the moral law, yet believe that in consequence of the death of Christ, the law has become less strict in its demands, and holiness holds a very subordinate place to faith.

The Romanists, on the other hand, contend that the inference of the Antinomians is fairly and legitimately drawn from the Protestant doctrine of justification, that this is the natural tendency of that doctrine, and that consequently it is a proof that it cannot be the doctrine of Scripture. Holiness, they affirm, is necessary to salvation; and, therefore, the doctrine of justification by faith is erroneous, because that doctrine, they say, is prejudicial to holiness. Now, if this were true, if it could be proved, that the doctrine of justification by faith, when believed and

* Rom. vi. 14, 15.

acted upon, had an immoral tendency; if the conclusion were just that it made void the law, and afforded encouragement to sin, we do not see how the objection could be overcome, and would be constrained to admit that we had misinterpreted Scripture. No doctrine which is opposed to holiness—which impairs the authority of divine law, can possibly be derived from the pure Word of God.

Now, we admit that the connexion between the doctrine of justification by faith and holiness, is not entirely self-evident. If a man is justified by faith, without any merits of his own,—if the sins of the believer are freely pardoned, and if his own works have nothing whatever to do in his attainment of heaven,—it would seem to follow that the hope of reward, and the fear of punishment cease, not altogether, but in some degree, to be motives to holiness, that they are less powerful motives to good works than they would be, if reward or punishment depended on merit or demerit. To what extent this is true will afterwards appear. But allowing it to be so; granting that in so far as the hope of reward and fear of punishment are motives to morality, these

motives become less powerful when we know that justification is by faith; still this is far more than balanced, if, as we shall prove to be the case, higher and more powerful and more enduring motives are substituted.

It is also admitted that the doctrine of justification by faith is liable to be abused by men of corrupt minds. The views and practice of the Antinomians prove this to be the case. And the same was true in the days of the apostles. The doctrine of justification was even then perverted, and from it men took occasion to sin. The epistle of James, as we have already observed, was especially directed against such pernicious views. And, therefore, if such was the case, even when the apostles were alive, we are not to be surprised that the like should happen in our days.

It is the plain and evident doctrine of Scripture that holiness is absolutely necessary to salvation. To affirm with the Antinomians that believers are delivered from the law as a rule of obedience,—that God not only justifies the ungodly, and at the time that they are ungodly, as we affirm, but even though they should continue to be ungodly,—is at

variance with the whole of Scripture. The Bible is full of precepts commanding us to repent of our sins, to abstain from all appearance of evil, to learn to do well, and to abound in the work of the Lord. The law is there revealed in all its fulness, illustrated in the most impressive manner, and enforced by a great variety of important considerations. Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it: He came not to deliver men from their obligations to obedience, but to furnish them with peculiar and powerful motives to obey, and to implant within them a heart which will render obedience at once voluntary, filial, and virtuous. Accordingly, the wicked are declared to be the objects of God's wrath, whilst the penitent and righteous are described as the objects of His redeeming mercy. Thus, not only the mercy, but also the holiness and justice of God are revealed in the Gospel. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."* To them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and im-

* Rom. i. 18.

mortality, God will render eternal life; but will execute the fierceness of His wrath upon them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth.* Those who persevere in wickedness are expressly excluded from heaven; the sentence of the law will be enforced against them, and they will suffer the punishment which their sins deserve. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."† "Into heaven there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."‡ On the other hand holiness is asserted to be an indispensable requisite for salvation. None are saved from the guilt of sin, except those who are freed from its power; none are finally delivered from the condemning sentence of the law, except those who to the utmost of their ability render its precepts a willing obedience. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His."§ "Verily, verily," says our Saviour, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."‖

* Rom. ii. 7-9. † 1 Cor. vi. 9. ‡ Rev. xxi. 27.
§ Rom. viii. 9. ‖ John iii. 3.

"He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."*

The apostle Paul, who insists so much on the doctrine of justification by faith, and without works, yet, above any of the writers of the New Testament, inculcates holiness and obedience to the moral law, as being absolutely indispensable. He appears anxious to guard his converts against that perversion of the doctrine of justification which would lead them to think that they were freed from the law as a rule of obedience. He tells them repeatedly that such was not the natural consequence of his doctrine, but that when truly understood, and really embraced, it would produce an opposite effect; and he exhorts them as believers, to walk in all the paths of new obedience, and to cultivate holiness in the fear of the Lord. "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as

* 1 John ii. 4.

instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."* And it is this apostle who expressly asserts that "without holiness no man can see the Lord."†

The Gospel, then, does not confound the moral distinction between good and evil; it does not save men irrespective of their characters; on the contrary, it denounces God's wrath against the wicked, and declares holiness to be absolutely necessary for salvation. How, and in what respects this is the case, we do not at present consider; we merely insist upon it as a revealed fact. The Antinomians assert that in consequence of the doctrine of justification by faith, there is no need of holiness; but in this they are obviously wrong, as all Scripture declares that without holiness there can be no salvation. Still, however, we admit that this is no answer to the objection that the doctrine of justification by faith is prejudicial to holiness. The Romanists readily admit the necessity of holiness, and it is from this that they infer

* Rom. vi. 12-14. † Heb. xii. 14.

the falsehood of our doctrine. This, then, is the main subject of dispute: not whether holiness is necessary to salvation, — but whether the Protestant doctrine of justification does or does not lessen our obligations or motives to holiness. The object of this chapter, then, is to shew to the Antinomian how it happens, what is *à priori* from texts of Scripture obvious, that it does not follow from the doctrine of justification that holiness is unnecessary; and to the Romanist, and to all others who entertain the above objection, that the doctrine of justification by faith only is wholly consistent with the main design of Christianity, the elevation of man's moral character.

These general observations as to the state of the question being premised, we now enter upon an examination of it, and shall endeavour to prove that the doctrine of justification by faith does not diminish, but, on the contarry, increases our obligations and motives to obedience.

I. And first we would remark, negatively, that justification by faith does not diminish our obligations and motives to obedience, so as to lessen their combined influence upon the mind.

The law of God is most reasonable, just, and eternally right. It is contained in these two precepts: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It is a perfect rule of righteousness; it enjoins everything which is morally good, and prohibits everything which is morally evil. "The law," says the apostle, "is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."* Now, our obligations to obey this law, are infinite in their nature, and eternal in their duration. It is written in our hearts, and recommends itself to our judgment. God is our Creator, and therefore has a supreme right to our love; He is the moral Governor of the universe, and therefore obedience to His law is the duty of all His subjects; He is infinitely holy, and therefore must always delight in holiness, and look upon all sin with abhorrence. It is impossible, then, that He will free men from their obligations to obey His law; for, in doing so, He would deny himself, lay aside His authority, and contradict His holiness.

* Rom. vii. 12.

Now, it is evident that the doctrine of justification by faith does not lessen these obligations. The nature of the law, the moral character of the Lawgiver, and our relation toward Him, as His morally accountable creatures, remain unaltered. The revelation of God as our Father and Saviour does not destroy or obscure the previous revelation of Him as our Creator and moral Governor. On the contrary, the natural obligations arising from these considerations are rendered more powerful and effective by faith. Two men may be under the same obligations; and yet the one may have a clearer sense and stronger feeling of his obligations than the other. Now, faith imparts this sense and feeling. It gives us clearer views of the relations in which we stand to God, as the creatures of His power, and the subjects of His moral government. It reveals to us the spiritual extent of the law, that the commandment is exceeding broad, that it reacheth not only to the external actions of the life, but to the thoughts of the heart. It impresses us with a deep sense of the holiness of God, and the opposition of His nature to

whatever is sinful. And thus, in all these respects, faith, instead of making void, establisheth the law; instead of diminishing, it increases the efficacy of our natural obligations to obedience.

It is, however, asserted that although our obligations may remain the same, yet that the motives to obedience are lessened by the doctrine of justification by faith, inasmuch as it deprives the law of its penalty as regards believers, and so impairs its moral influence. And, indeed, in this lies the chief force of the objection. That fear is a most powerful motive to obedience, or at least to an external conformity to the law, is readily admitted; and if there were no punishment annexed to disobedience, the law would greatly lose its authority or influence over sinful men. But then it is to be observed, that although believers are delivered from the law as a ground of condemnation, yet they must persevere in faith and holiness unto the end. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."* "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence

* Matt. x. 22.

stedfast unto the end."* And the apostle Paul himself says: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."† It is true that when a man really believes on Christ he receives the grace of perseverance; his salvation is secured by the promise of God; he can never fall from the faith, and can never perish; but it ought not to be overlooked that this is a perseverance in holiness; it is not that he will be saved whatever his character and conduct may be, but that he will continue in holiness to the end. Hence, then, the believer is acted upon by every possible motive to obedience; the promises of the Gospel encourage him, while the threatenings of the law alarm him; hope and fear have alike their influence over him.

It is also to be observed that the motive of fear influences the believer in a different manner from that in which it influences others. Actions performed from the mere fear of punishment are not properly virtuous; such obedience is the obedience of a slave,

* Heb. iii. 14. † 1 Cor. ix. 27.

not that willing and loving obedience which the law demands. But what the believer chiefly fears is the displeasure of his heavenly Father; his fear resembles that filial fear which a dutiful child has toward a beloved parent; and hence obedience, proceeding from such a principle, is virtuous and lovely. It is also to be remembered that the believer is frequently punished for his sins in this life, by chastisements sent by God; and therefore, all those warnings against sloth, worldliness, and backsliding, ought to have their full influence upon him.

But whatever force is in the above objection, it is, we think, completely removed when we consider, that assurance of salvation does not usually exist until the believer has made considerable progress in holiness. To believe in Christ for justification is one thing, and to know that we believe in Christ and are justified is another; and we can only come to this knowledge by perceiving in ourselves the fruits of faith. Did a Christian immediately know, from the moment he believed in Christ, that he was a true believer, and as such secure of salvation, there would be reason to

fear that such a discovery might prove prejudicial to real holiness, by producing in his mind a slothful security. But in general, before a man is assured of salvation, he has made considerable progress in holiness, his affections are sanctified, the prevailing bent of his will is turned toward what is holy and good, and his earnest desire is, to love, serve, and obey God. Now, in such a state as this, it is evident that he will continue in obedience, even although the motive arising from the fear of punishment has ceased, in a great measure, to operate. Far stronger, and purer, and holier motives influence him. Gratitude and love to God, and a spiritual sense of the natural loveliness of holiness, and hatefulness of sin, will incline him to do his duty, and guard him against the danger of backsliding. "Perfect love casteth out fear; he that feareth is not made perfect in love."* This is the very disposition of the blessed in heaven; they are perfectly secure; over them the fear of punishment can have no moral influence; it is love alone which causes them to delight in the law of God. But no one would say that

* 1 John iv. 18.

because the law, as regards them, is deprived of its penalty, that therefore it has lost its moral influence; on the contrary, they are perfected in holiness, because they are perfected in love. The confirmed believer is secured in his obedience in the same manner; he lives in the Spirit, and walks in the Spirit; the more powerful motive of love has succeeded that of fear. But until a man has attained to a considerable degree of holiness, until he knows that the Spirit of Christ dwells in him; we do not see what title he can have to the full assurance of hope, and therefore fear of incurring the penalty of the law ought to have its full influence over him.

II. But secondly we would remark, positively, that faith furnishes new motives to obedience.

We have already partially adverted to this in our former head. We have shown how, as regards the confirmed believer, the motive of fear is supplanted by purer and more generous motives. These new motives, arising from the Gospel, of which natural religion knows little, are very numerous; and all of them are specially connected with the doctrine of justification through the righteousness of

Christ. We can only enumerate, and that shortly, a few of the most important.

1. *The insight into the nature of sin* which the sufferings of Christ afford, is a powerful motive to dissuade the believer from its commission. It was a consciousness of sin, as the transgression of the law, and a feeling of the awful danger to which it exposed him, that first constrained him to flee to the Saviour. And when his views of the scheme of salvation become clearer and more enlightened; when he thinks on the infinite price at which that righteousness whereby he is justified was procured; the more does he see the evil of sin, and the more settled is his hatred of it. He is enabled to perceive that such was the infinite demerit of sin, that before it could be expiated, the Son of God had to take upon himself human nature, live in this world a life of sorrow, endure the most excruciating torments, and at length expire on a cross of agony and shame. And when he thinks on the supreme dignity of the Saviour, on the greatness and severity of His sufferings, on the value of that blood which was shed on Calvary, on the inflexibility of that justice

which demanded such an atonement, he cannot but be impressed with a deep sense of the heinousness of sin. The love of sin is mortified within him; he now no longer regards it as a trifle; he leaves off its commission; and reckons himself "to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

2. *Gratitude to God* is another peculiar motive to obedience which faith excites. Gratitude is generally admitted to be a most powerful motive to action; and ingratitude is regarded as sinful and infamous, as the mark of a base and degraded nature. A man will do that to oblige a benefactor which he would not do for any other. It has been well remarked, that "gratitude gives the conscience a power in the soul where it exists, which could arise from no other source. Conscience reproves for the neglect of known duty; but to neglect duty, when it involves the sense of gratitude to the kindest of benefactors, is to arm the moral sense of the soul with a two-edged sword. When the lawgiver is likewise the benefactor, conscience rebukes, not only for wrong doing, but for ingratitude." And

in the case before us, gratitude is called forth into its liveliest exercise, and is carried to its utmost obligations. The unspeakable greatness of the evils from which he is delivered, the transcendent nature of the blessings conferred upon him, and the great sacrifices at which this was done, must all have a tendency to awaken gratitude in the heart of the believer. God sent His Son into the world to redeem him; the blessed Saviour became incarnate, suffered, and died for him on the cross; the Holy Spirit sanctifies his polluted nature; forgiveness is offered him on the easiest terms; this offer he has been led by grace to accept; and now all his sins are pardoned, he is made a partaker of the joy of the Holy Ghost, and adopted into the family of God. Surely, when the believer thinks on all that God has done for him, and when he meditates on his behaviour toward God,—how undeserving he is of these benefits and how worthy of punishment,—his heart must be filled with gratitude, and this grateful disposition must lead him to obey the law of God. The language of his heart is: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" What shall

I do for Him who has done so much for me? What return can I make for these many and undeserved favours? not indeed in the way of repayment, for this is impossible, but as a proof and testimony of my gratitude. The love of Christ constraineth him to live no more unto himself, but unto Him that died for him. And thus he is constrained, by a sense of the mercies of God, to present his whole person as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God.

3. Similar to the motive of gratitude is that of *love to God.* Love to God can have little or no influence in the heart of the unregenerate; as long as a man believes that God is his enemy, so long does he fear and dread Him; and, besides, the holy nature of God is the object of his aversion, rather than of his delight. But when the believer is led to hope that God really loves him, he, in his turn, is led to love God. "We love Him because He first loved us." He no longer regards God as an avenger, a judge, and punisher. He no longer, like his first parent, seeks to hide himself from the presence of the Lord. A delightful sense of the paternal love of his

Father in heaven takes possession of his heart, and he is delivered, in part at least, from that fear which "has torment." Thus his obedience becomes similar to that willing, yet reverent obedience which a dutiful son renders to an affectionate father. The believer, instead of being freed from the law, as a rule of duty, takes pleasure in keeping it; obedience to it becomes delightful; the liberty of the children of God is matter of experience; love gains the ascendency over slavish fear and dread; he feels himself influenced by more powerful motives than those which actuated him in his former state; so that, "being made free from sin, and having become the servant of God, he has his fruit unto holiness, and obeys from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered him."*

4. *Hope* is another motive called into action by faith. There is an intimate connexion between hope and faith; they exist together. "Hope springs from faith, and faith is sustained and exercised by hope." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of

* Rom. vi. 22, 17.

the glory of God."* It is good things promised that are the objects of the Christian's faith. "Faith is the confidence of things hoped for." Now hope, as a motive to obedience, acts in various ways. If we consider the *source* of our hope—that this is Christ—that upon Him we are dependent for every thing, this will excite within us a salutary fear of offending Him. To offend one on whom we are dependent is an act of great imprudence; and, therefore, to offend Christ must be the highest degree of imprudence, because we are dependent upon Him for everything in life, at death, and throughout eternity. If, again, we consider the *object* of our hope—that it is the hope of admission into a heaven of holiness—that it is the hope of enjoying the love, and friendship, and communion of God,—that it is the hope of being admitted into the society of holy angels and redeemed men, the natural tendency of entertaining such hopes must be sanctifying. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure." To be much engaged in meditating on heaven will raise

* Rom. v. 1, 2.

a man's affections from worldly pursuits, and worldly objects, and strengthen all that is pure and holy within him. And farther, if we consider the *issue* of our hope, that the believer is engaged in no doubtful undertaking, that in all his struggles against sin, and strivings after moral purity, he will finally succeed,—that success will at length crown his endeavours, and that he will be accepted in Christ Jesus,—this will animate and encourage him to a patient continuance in well-doing. Despair of success has a depressing influence, whereas the prospect of success sustains a man under his labours, and incites him to increased exertion. Animated by the hope of acceptance, the believer continues steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that his labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

III. And this leads us to observe, thirdly, that faith is always productive of good works.

It is so, in the manner we have already stated, by giving rise to new and powerful motives to obedience. It is also so, because such is the revealed fact. If nothing more were meant by faith than the mere passive

assent of the understanding to the truths of the Gospel; there would be ground for the objection under discussion, and it would be difficult to see the connexion between holiness and the doctrine of justification by faith. But faith is a living, active, permanent principle in the soul; it applies to itself whatever is revealed in the Word of God; it is the reception of the Gospel into the heart. It is ever described in Scripture as an active working principle. Paul tells us that it "works by love;" Peter that it "purifies the heart;" John that it is "the victory that overcometh the world;" James that if unaccompanied by works it is dead; and a greater than these apostles asserts, that "all things are possible to him that believeth." Faith is the only instrument by which we are justified, but good works are its necessary attendants; and, as the apostle tells us, we may as well suppose the body to exist without the spirit or breath, as to suppose saving faith destitute of works.

If we were to inquire more minutely into the moral influence of faith, we would find, that, to a much greater extent than we would

at first suppose, it is this which governs the man. A man's character is formed, and his conduct regulated in a great measure according to what he believes. Faith, whether true or false, exerts a powerful influence over the conscience; so much so, that what one man will do without remorse, would excite the deepest feelings of anguish in the breast of another. For example, a man who has no high sense of the reverence due to God, will without scruple take His name in vain; whereas a true Christian could not do so without anguish of mind. So also the affections are influenced by what we believe. According as we believe that good or bad qualities exist in any person, or that he loves or hates us, so will be our feelings toward him. And hence it is that faith in the true Christian governs his conscience, influences his affections, and regulates his conduct; and the stronger the faith—that is, the firmer his convictions, and the clearer his views—the greater will be its efficacy in purifying his heart.

It is also to be observed that faith brings the mind in contact with the truth. It is

the truth contained in the Word which is the instrument of our sanctification. "Sanctify them," says our Saviour, "through thy truth: thy word is truth."* "God," says St. Paul, "hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."† "Being born again," says St. Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."‡ "Of His own will," says St. James, "begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures."§ But the truth can only sanctify us as it is known and realised and believed. And no one can estimate the influence which a firm belief of the pure, and holy, and spiritual truths of the Gospel—and above all which a vivid realisation of the holy character of God, as revealed in the Word, and as seen embodied in the person and atonement of Christ Jesus, will have upon the soul. Whereas, on the contrary, such is the nature of the truths of Christianity, that it is a contradiction to realise and

* John xvii. 17.
† 2 Thess. ii. 13.
‡ 1 Pet. i. 23.
§ James i. 18.

believe them, and yet not to be influenced by them. The connexion, then, between saving faith and good works, is inseparable; wherever true faith is, it will produce its fruits; the man will act up to what he believes.

IV. And this leads us to observe, fourthly, that faith is the great source of good works.

It is objected to the doctrine of justification by faith, that it destroys the necessity of good works; whereas, on the contrary, everything that is great and holy in humanity, springs from faith. Hope of reward, and fear of punishment, can never be a true foundation for virtue or moral excellence; they are motives merely mercenary; they principally affect external actions; they have little influence in producing those religious, and spiritual, and good affections, that purity of intention, that holiness of disposition, that love to God, without which both Scripture and our own reason tell us there are no good works at all. It is contradicted by all our religious feelings to affirm that we can be spiritually holy, can adore and love God, because we will be rewarded if we do, and punished if we do not. Not that there is

anything wrong in these motives; on the contrary, they are instinctive feelings in our nature; but they are entirely negative. Now those who consider that justification is not by faith, but by works, are actuated by such motives; and, therefore, the very obedience which they render to the law of God, so far as they are thus actuated, is mercenary, servile, and of no moral worth. And therefore it is, that we might well retort the objection of our opponents back upon themselves, and affirm that their theory of justification by works, very greatly weakens the motives to spiritual obedience. And hence, also, if these mercenary motives are in fact diminished by the doctrine of justification by faith, as we have already admitted that they are, it cannot on that account be affirmed that the motives to holy obedience are lessened, especially as these mercenary motives are supplanted by motives purer and more powerful.

If, on the other hand, we trace those actions which are holy, and good, and truly virtuous to the principle from which they proceeded, we shall find that that principle was faith. Faith is in reality the root of all

other virtues; the great source of good works; that which imparts life, and energy, and activity, into the Christian's graces. The greatest actions of the best of men—every eminent act of piety performed by Old Testament saints, is ascribed by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, to faith. "By it the elders obtained a good report." By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; by faith Enoch pleased God; by faith Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; by faith Moses forsook Egypt, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Nor is the influence of faith confined to those Old Testament saints mentioned by the apostle. By faith Job, reduced from affluence to want, deprived of his children, and smitten to the ground with disease, exclaimed: "I know that my Redeemer liveth: yet in my flesh shall I see God." By faith Elijah appeared as the intrepid reformer of the worship of God, and feared not the wrath of Ahab. By faith Hezekiah, when his country was invaded

by Sennacherib, spread out his case before the God of his fathers, and strengthened himself by reliance on the power of the Almighty. By faith Daniel chose rather to be cast into a den of lions, than to omit his daily devotions. By faith the three children were saved in the burning fiery furnace, because they refused to worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar, but trusted in the living God. By faith Nehemiah forsook a high station in the court of Persia, denied himself the comforts of life, in order that he might visit, and comfort, and strengthen his countrymen, and assist them against their enemies. By faith the prophet Habakkuk, reduced to the greatest straits, exclaimed: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Or if we turn to the apostles and primitive Christians, we shall find that the same principle of faith actuated them. Faith transformed them from bloody persecutors, to chosen disciples; from being pro-

fane, and unholy, and immoral, to be examples of every virtue which adorns humanity. By faith they forsook the pleasures of the world, and placed their hopes on things above; by faith they renounced idolatry, and worshipped the only living and true God; by faith they preached the Gospel, and were actuated by the purest motives for the salvation of men; by faith they not only submitted to persecution with resignation, but rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer in the cause of Christ; by faith they suffered martyrdom, and sealed their testimony with their blood. Nor is faith now deprived of its efficacy; it is still the same living active principle. By faith the believer is restrained from sin, because he knows that the eyes of the invisible God are upon him; by faith his affections are set upon things above, because he believes in an invisible eternity; by faith he blesses God in suffering, because he is assured that all things work together for his good; by faith he is cheered on the bed of death, because, like Paul, he knows in whom he has believed. In short, the life of a Christian is nothing but a life of faith. "The just

shall live by faith." "Without faith," says the apostle, "it is impossible to please God:" whereas, by faith we perform those actions which are eminently pleasing to Him.

Thus, then, we trust that we have fully proved that there is no ground whatever, either for the inference of the Antinomian, that believers are free from the law as a rule of obedience, or for the objection of the Romanist, that the Protestant doctrine of justification lessens the motives to obedience; but that, on the contrary, there is a real, and inseparable, and strong connexion between justification by faith and holiness; so that, in the words of the apostle, the law, instead of being made void, is established by faith. The arguments which we adduced were these four:— Faith does not lessen the obligations and motives to virtuous obedience. Faith furnishes new motives to obedience. Faith is always productive of good works. Faith is the great source of holy actions. Other arguments might be given; a different method of treating the subject might be adopted; but the limits of this work did not permit us further to enlarge.

In thus stating the connexion between the doctrine of justification and holiness, we have been led to consider chiefly the moral influence of faith and the motives to holiness which are furnished by it. It must not, however, be inferred from this that we ignore or overlook the influences of the Holy Spirit in regenerating and sanctifying the soul. The Spirit is the great agent in our sanctification: He it is who is the author of all that holiness which is in the believer. And whatever be the force of motives, there is, we consider, besides these, and along with these, the infusion of a spiritual life into the soul, which is altogether distinct from a man's own natural impulses or conscientious movements toward holiness, and without which these motives would be insufficient. All sort of motives for man's regeneration—fear of punishment, hope of reward, desire of moral excellence, feeling of internal want, have hitherto failed. The motives may be strong enough; but it is the moral nature of man that is weak, and therefore, in the language of inspiration, "a new heart" is necessary to remove this mighty and otherwise insurmountable obstacle to holiness. "Except a man be born of the Spirit,

he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And it is to be observed that one of the very first effects of this great moral change upon the soul is faith—a realisation of spiritual truths, a belief in their reality and importance, and a disposition of mind toward them. "The fruit of the Spirit is faith."

We learn from all that we have been considering the connexion which subsists between justification and sanctification. In a former chapter, we considered the essential difference which there is between them. But although distinct in nature, we yet learn from this chapter that they are inseparably connected, and that the bond of union between them is faith. The faith which justifies is a Christian grace; it is the fruit of the Spirit, and the commencement of sanctification in the soul. Faith is the vital bond which unites the believer to Christ: it is the first exercise of that spiritual life which the Spirit has infused into the soul. The believer is united unto Christ by a double bond; the one being the gift of the Spirit on the part of Christ, and the other the exercise of faith on the part of the believer. None, then, are justified, except those who are sanctified; none are

saved, except those who have the character which is produced in the soul by the Spirit of God. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." "Thus," says Calvin, "it appears how true it is, that we are justified not *without* and yet not *by* works; since, in the participation of Christ, by which we are justified, is contained not less sanctification than justification."*

* Calvin's Institutes, vol. ii. p. 386: Calvin Translation Society.

CHAPTER IX.

ON GOOD WORKS AFTER JUSTIFICATION.

It is important, in order to the full treatment of our subject, to inquire what place good works occupy in the Christian system, wherein their necessity consists, and what purposes they are intended to serve. We have already proved that they do not occupy that position which they hold in most religious systems, namely, that on which the reward hereafter depends, but that notwithstanding the motives for their performance are not lessened, but strengthened and increased. The object of this chapter, then, is to consider the causes of good works, in what respects they are necessary, and in what sense they are rewarded.

There are several elements necessary to constitute a work good in the sight of God. It must be done in conformity with the divine law. This is the revealed will of God, the perfect rule by which we are to try our

actions. If an action be contrary to this law, it is unlawful and sinful; if it be not therein commanded, it cannot be acceptable unto God, for the law is perfect, and where no command is, there can be no obedience, and so no good work. It must proceed from a right principle. It is at the heart that God looks; He judges us by our own internal dispositions; and our actions are only good in His sight, when they are the fruits of holy affections. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is the great commandment of the law, and therefore if there be no love to God, no religious principle, there can be no true obedience. And it must be directed to a right end. It is the motive which determines the quality of the action; so that an action, however externally conformable to the divine law, and however beneficial to man, yet if it be performed from an improper motive, if the intention be wrong, is sinful before a holy and heart-searching God.

We would only further remark, by way of preliminary observation, that by good works we understand not only those which are external, as acts of worship toward God and

works of benevolence toward man; but also those which are internal, as loving and fearing God, trusting in Christ, contrition for sin, self-renunciation, desiring the good of our fellow-men, and such inward feelings of the soul. In short, by good works we intend Christian virtue, whether in the state of mind or in the outward life—that holiness of heart and life which it is one great design of Christianity to create and foster.

On this subject there are three points which require our consideration: *First*, the causes of good works; *Secondly*, the necessity and usefulness of good works; and *Thirdly*, the reward of good works.

I.—THE CAUSES OF GOOD WORKS.

According to the Christian system, good works are not the cause, but the consequence of regeneration. They are the effects of a holy disposition,—the good fruits of a good tree. A man is first united unto Christ by faith, and made a partaker of the influences of the Spirit, before he can perform the works of righteousness. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves;

it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* In particular, good works are produced by implanting holy dispositions, by the operation of new motives, and by the special impulse of the Holy Spirit.

Good works arise *from implanting and strengthening good dispositions and principles, and from the gradual declension of bad principles.* The Holy Spirit is the author of all true holiness in the soul of man; He is the source of all virtuous dispositions and good works. In our regeneration he infuses within us the principles of a new and spiritual life, He sanctifies our affections, and weakens our evil principles and habits. This is the great promise of the new covenant, a chief part of the good tidings of the Gospel, and the great bulwark of Christianity—one of those great points in which it is distinguished from heathen morality. "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments

* Eph. ii. 8-10.

and do them." All our religious habits and affections, all our permanent gifts and graces, are represented as the fruits of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And whatever attainments any one makes in Christian virtue—however eminent his piety, and fervent his love, and strong his faith—these are to be ascribed to the operations of that divine grace which was at first implanted within him. Thus St. Paul takes no glory to himself for all his many labours, but humbly and gratefully ascribes them to the grace of God. "By the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."*

Good works also arise from the *operation of new motives*. The purity of our motives is essential to the goodness of our actions. We must not be actuated by sinful motives, else they will infuse their poison into our actions and convert them into crimes. Now in the

* 1 Cor. xv. 10.

regenerate man, new, and holy, and pure motives are called into operation. The glory of God is now the great end of his existence; he now aims at serving and pleasing his Creator; and it is his great endeavour and earnest desire that the cause of his Saviour may be promoted by him. Christ commands us to glorify God by our good works; and the apostle exhorts us to do all things to the glory of God. This is the true end to which our actions should be directed. And thus the very same external action may be performed by two men, and yet in the one case it may be sinful, and in the other righteous; because the one man, in the performance of it, may be actuated by motives which are evil, and the other by motives which are holy and good.

But not only do good works arise from sanctified dispositions, and spring from holy motives, but also we consider that in the performance of them there is *a special impulse of the Holy Spirit*,—an impulse which is distinct from those permanent gifts which He has implanted in the soul. The Holy Spirit is represented as taking up His abode in our souls, as dwelling within us, and as exciting

and urging us to the performance of good works. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."* "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you."† "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."‡ How the Spirit thus works in the soul we know not; nor does it seem possible to distinguish His special influences from the workings and conscientious movements of our own minds.§

From all that has been said, it is evident that good works come after justification. Faith is the first exercise of that spiritual life which is implanted within the soul by the Holy Spirit; and all the gifts and virtues of the Christian character are subsequent to it. It is by faith that we are united to Christ, and so made partakers of His Spirit. And thus it may well be said that faith is the foundation, and good works the superstructure; faith the root, and good works the fruit. "Add to your faith," says St. Peter,

* Phil. ii. 13. † Rom. viii. 9. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 5.
§ See Westminster Confession, xvi. 3.

"virtue," and all the other fruits of the Spirit. A man is only actuated by the Spirit as he is in Christ Jesus; and if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is justified. But although good works come after justification, yet they are its inseparable accompaniments. Saving faith is the fruit of the Spirit, one of those graces which He implants within the soul, and is the commencement of the work of sanctification. And hence if faith be destitute of good works, it is a proof that it is spurious, that it does not spring from the Spirit of God.

Hence, then, it appears that there are elements which go to make up a good action, in a religious point of view, which cannot enter into the actions of the unregenerate, as love to God, a desire for His glory, and faith. The works of unbelievers may certainly benefit their fellow-men. They may do those things which are externally in conformity with the law of God, and which are highly beneficial to others. For example, an unregenerate man may give much alms to the poor, may relieve their wants, and minister to their necessities. The actions in themselves are good; they are what the law commands. The motives also

may be in a certain degree praiseworthy; there may be a generous desire to do good to others, a disinterested wish to lessen their miseries, and increase their happiness. But still, in a religious point of view, they are sadly defective. In the hearts of the unregenerate, there can be no true spiritual love to God, no admiration of the perfect holiness and purity of His character, no desire to be like God, and to be more and more conformed to His image; and without such a feeling of love, there can be no good works acceptable in His sight. And hence it is that we consider human depravity to consist chiefly in an alienation of the heart from God, exemplified in the conduct of our first parent when he attempted to hide himself from the presence of the Lord. There may be much which is comparatively good in the disposition and conduct of the unregenerate; much that is worthy of our approbation, and which excites our love and esteem; much that is useful both to themselves and to others; we deny them not that praise which is their due; we refuse them not that esteem which they merit; we are far from representing human nature as

if it were altogether fiendish and loathsome—as if there were nothing in it to attract our love; the Scripture does not countenance such an opinion, and experience contradicts it; but still there is in the natural heart no true love to God, no spirituality of insight, no real recognition of the divine claims; and therefore it is that there are no works of the unregenerate, which are good and acceptable in His sight. The heart is corrupt, and therefore the actions are sinful; the fountain is polluted, and therefore the streams are defiled. "Without faith," says the apostle, "it is impossible to please God."

II.—THE NECESSITY AND USEFULNESS OF GOOD WORKS.

As good works are the effects of regeneration, and follow justification; so it is evident that they are not necessary as any preparation to our compliance with the Gospel invitations, by believing and trusting in Christ. And yet this is a mistake which many commit. They think that they require some preparation before coming to Christ, that as yet they are not sufficiently holy; and that they must wait

until they have made themselves more worthy. But this arises from a total misconception of the Gospel plan. Our warrant to believe is not in ourselves, but in the invitations of the Gospel; and these are free and addressed to all men, everywhere, without exception. Our holiness is not a preparation to our coming to Christ, but the consequence of our having already come. A sick man might as well say that he must wait till he recovers, before he will apply to the physician; whereas, the very reason of his application, is that he may obtain his recovery. So, in like manner, sin is the disease of the soul, and holiness is the health to which it is to be restored, by the application of the Gospel remedy.

Nor are good works necessary as the meritorious cause of our salvation. This we have already sufficiently demonstrated. Our good works will never save us, they will never bring us to heaven. If we trust to them, we trust to that which will not profit us. The only meritorious cause of our salvation is the finished work of Christ, and we must carefully separate from this everything of our own. If, then, we perform good works with

a view to work out merit of our own; if, like the Jews of old, we go about to establish our own righteousness; and thus if our works have the effect of keeping us from the Saviour, and of nourishing within us a self-righteous spirit, they are actually injurious; and therefore there is ground of truth in that apparent paradox of Luther: "We must beware of sins, but much more of good works."

But still it is the peculiar duty of believers to perform good works. They alone can really perform them, as they alone possess those qualities which are requisite for their performance. And hence it is the Gospel plan that a man should first believe in Christ, and then be diligent in the practice of Christian virtues. He is created in Christ Jesus unto good works. And hence it is that believers are exhorted to walk worthy of their calling, and to abound in the fruits of righteousness. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."* And although not necessary, either as any prepara-

* Tit. iii. 18.

tion to our compliance with the Gospel invitation by believing on Christ, or as the meritorious cause of our salvation; yet, in many other, and highly important respects, are good works necessary and useful to believers.

1. Believers are bound to perform good works, because *they are good works.* There is implanted within us a conscience, the moral sense of the soul, which tells us that we must do what is right. Even although good works were attended with no advantage, either to ourselves or to others; yet conscience tells us that they are our duty. Yea, even although the law of God were altogether silent on the subject; yet there is a certain course of action which conscience approves, and a contrary course which it condemns. Constituted as our moral nature is, we cannot avoid judging that lying, cruelty, and fraud are sinful, whereas truth, honesty, and benevolence, are virtuous. Whatever be the consequences of a virtuous line of conduct; even although these consequences be pernicious; yet conscience tells us, independently of all considerations, that we ought to pursue it. Now this

faculty of conscience is implanted in every breast; and its power is not weakened, but strengthened in the regenerate; its sense is not blunted, but rendered more acute and discerning. Good works, then, are necessary to believers, because they are agreeable to the dictates of conscience. From the mere fact that they are good, conscience teaches us that believers are bound to perform them. Hence, we are enjoined to be subject to magistrates for conscience' sake: and to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. "Our rejoicing," says St. Paul, "is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."*

2. Good works are necessary as being *a principal part of our salvation.* The conceptions of many as to the nature of salvation, are vague and erroneous. Salvation is a deliverance from sin, not merely from the punishment due to sin, but from sin itself; the restoration of man to purity and happiness. Hence, it follows, that holiness, instead of

* 2 Cor. i. 12.

being the cause, is in reality a principal part of salvation. Christ saves His people not *in* but *from* their sins. * We are chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame, before Him in love. † Christ gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself as a peculiar people, zealous of good works. ‡ This, then, is one reason why we are elected by God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and called by grace, even that we should be holy. "God," says the apostle, "hath called us to holiness." § And, therefore, if a man be destitute of good works; if there be no holy dispositions within him; if his nature be not sanctified; if he have not experienced the renewing of the Holy Ghost; if the Gospel do not exert any purifying influence over him; it is a manifest proof that he is not in the way of salvation. He is entirely ignorant of the nature of that salvation which Christ came to procure; there is no saving process going on in his soul. Though holiness, then, is not the ground of

* Matt. i. 21. † Eph. i. 4.
‡ Tit. ii. 4. § 1 Thess. iv. 7.

our salvation, not the procuring cause of our obtaining the favour of God; yet it is salvation itself. It is not the medicine which restores the sick man to health, but it is the health to which he is restored.

3. Good works are necessary as *a preparation for heaven.* It is from no arbitrary appointment that holiness is made essential to salvation; it arises from the very necessity of the case. An unholy man, even although his sins were pardoned, and the curse of the law, so far as its penal consequences are concerned, were removed, and he were admitted into heaven, yet could not possibly be happy there. He would be entirely out of his element. He wants those feelings and faculties which are requisite for relishing heaven's joys, for mixing in heaven's society, and for being engaged in heaven's services. The enjoyment of God, communion with the holy and the good, perpetual adoration, and, in a word, the all-pervading influence of perfect holiness would, instead of affording him any gratification, be disagreeable to his taste and contrary to his inclination. There could be no sympathy between him and the saints in light, no feelings in common, no

social intercourse. The temper of heaven must be cultivated here, before we can enjoy its pleasures hereafter. "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." Hence it is, that holiness is our preparation for heaven; it is the way which leads to it; and none are finally saved except those who walk in that way. Although, then, we are not saved on account of our holiness, yet none will ever get to heaven except the holy and the good. The unholy are expressly excluded from it; into it nothing enters that defiles or works abomination; the way of sin is the road to destruction and terminates in death. "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God."* And thus in this sense, as a preparation for heaven, holiness is absolutely necessary for salvation.

4. We are bound to perform good works as *acts of obedience to the law of God.* Although believers are delivered from the condemning sentence of the law, being redeemed from its curse, and are in this sense not under the law but under grace; yet they are not and cannot

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

possibly be delivered from it as a rule of obedience. We are the creatures of God, and the subjects of His moral government, and therefore are bound to render a loving and willing obedience to His law. Nay, as believers, we are under even greater obligations to obedience than the worldly; inasmuch as clearer views of duty are imparted to us, greater favours are conferred upon us, and we are rendered more capable of obedience. The chief end of grace bestowed upon us is to deliver us from our corrupt dispositions, to free us from the slavery of sin, that so as the servants of Christ we might serve God in newness of spirit, actuated by higher motives and influenced by holier feelings. And hence it follows, that the wilful sins of believers are in reality more aggravated than those of unbelievers. The crime of ingratitude is added to that of rebellion; the influences of the Spirit are resisted, and the greater motives and obligations to obedience, which faith creates, are disregarded and broken. Thus, then, good works are necessary to believers as acts of obedience to the divine law. The obligations arising from their relations to God, as His creatures,

and subjects of law, are still binding upon them; and these are increased by the new obligations, arising from the relations under which faith brings them, as the children of God and the heirs of salvation.

5. By the performance of good works *we glorify God.* The glory of God is the chief end of man: and to this we are bound to refer all our actions. Now we can glorify God only by endeavouring to be like Him, to reflect, as it were, however dimly and feebly, that inconceivable glory which resides within Him. So far as we are holy, God's glory shines forth by us; so far as we are unholy, we dishonour God. And especially is this true with regard to the Gospel. By being holy we recommend the Gospel to others; we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and thus advance His cause and glory in the world. Whereas by professing to be Christians, and yet dishonouring our profession by an ungodly life, we bring contempt upon religion, we give occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme, we confirm sinners in their evil courses, we are guilty of no less a crime than that of making Christ the minister of sin, as if His doctrine

encouraged wickedness and was compatible with vice and immorality. Good works, then, are necessary to manifest the glory of God. This our Saviour teaches us when He says: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." * And again, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." † And the apostle says: "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." ‡ As the image of the sun, reflected on the bosom of a lake, naturally leads ou thoughts upwards to that sun of which it is the image, but on whose brightness we cannot gaze; so do the good works of believers shadow forth the glory of Him, by whose grace they are performed, and whose nature they resemble.

6. Believers are bound to perform good works *as being the proper expressions of gratitude.* We need not dwell upon the many reasons which the true believer has for gratitude to God—as being called from a state of sin and peril by His grace, redeemed by the blood of

* Matt. v. 16. † John xv. 8. ‡ Phil. i. 11.

Jesus, forgiven all trespasses, made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, admitted into the family of God, and constituted an heir of the heavenly inheritance. Now, the return which God requires for all these mercies is a cheerful and willing obedience—the consecration of our whole persons to His service. In this manner only can we manifest our gratitude; we cannot give Him anything which He does not already possess, but we may offer Him our grateful hearts, we may devote ourselves and all our powers to the promotion of His glory. "The love of Christ," says the apostle, "constrains us to live no more unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us."* And in this manner we should offer on the altar of gratitude our bodies and our souls, as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. All our faculties, and time, and influence, and riches ought to be devoted to the service of Him who has done so much for us—consecrated as "a thank-offering for the blessings of redemption."† Good works, then, are necessary to believers as expressions of gratitude. "Ye are," says St.

* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. † Neander.

Peter, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye might shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."*

7. Good works are *the only satisfactory evidences of grace.* The assurance of salvation is an inestimable privilege which all believers should endeavour to obtain; but it can only be obtained by the careful performance of good works. As the tree is known by its fruits, so grace in the soul can only be ascertained by holy actions in the life; these are the fruits of the Spirit, and are therefore a sure evidence of His work in the soul. Faith, and, indeed, every other Christian virtue, can only be known to exist by being active. It is when we experience holy desires, and exhibit holy actions, that we may humbly hope that we possess that grace from which these desires and actions spring. "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him."† And St.

* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

† 1 John ii. 3, 4.

Peter tells us that it is by adding to our faith the other Christian virtues, that we can make our calling and election sure.* All other marks or evidences whatever, are unsatisfactory or vain. If a man exhibit in his conduct a carnal and worldly life, if his heart be destitute of virtuous affections, and his life fruitless of acts of new obedience, if he be a stranger to the ways of holiness and neglectful of his duties to God, however much he may boast of his faith and consider himself destined to eternal life, yet he is only deceiving his own soul; those good works are wanting which are the necessary effects and the only evidences of saving faith. Good works, then, are necessary as evidences of grace; and if these be absent we can have no reason to hope that we are in a justified state.

8. Good works are *useful not only to ourselves, but to others.* We are not sent into this world to live to ourselves. Indeed, one great design of Christianity is to destroy that selfishness which grows in the human heart as in its native soil; to impart generous, and disinterested, and pure motives of action, and

* 2 Pet. i. 10.

to teach us to love our neighbour as ourselves. "Let every one of us," says the apostle, "please his neighbour for his good to edification." * Now, we benefit our neighbours by our good works, and injure them by bad and wicked works. The very name, *good works*, implies, that by them we do good to others; and, accordingly, all those works of benevolence, which are performed from proper motives and a regard to Christ, will be acknowledged and rewarded at the day of judgment. The true believer, when once he has betaken himself to Christ, seeks to do good to his fellowmen. He endeavours to benefit them in their temporal interests,—to diminish the evils of poverty, to dry up the tears of sorrow, to mitigate the pains of affliction, and to advance the interests and increase the happiness of others. But especially is he alive to the welfare of their souls; having himself experienced the danger of our natural state, and the necessity of coming to the Saviour for justification of life, he seeks to bring others to Him, and thus to save their souls from death and to cover the multitude of their sins.

* Rom. xv. 2.

In these, and in many other respects, good works are necessary and useful to believers. Although they are in no sense whatever the cause of our salvation, yet they serve other necessary purposes, so that without them we cannot be saved. We assert, then, that good works are necessary to salvation, not as being the meritorious cause, but as being one chief end of salvation, and a necessary preparation for admission into heaven, so that none ever entered heaven except by the way of holiness and the performance of good works. Even the thief on the cross, the only example in Scripture of a deathbed repentance, manifested his faith by his works; for he acknowledged his crimes, owned Christ as his Lord amid the shame of the cross, entrusted his soul to His care, and rebuked the impiety of his fellow-sufferer. "Faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." *

III.—THE REWARD OF GOOD WORKS.

It is the evident doctrine of Scripture that the good works of believers will be rewarded by God. The passages which assert or sup-

* See on this subject Dickinson's Letters.

pose this, are very numerous. God is declared to be the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* Our Saviour says, "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest." † "Every man," says St. Paul, "shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour."‡ And the apostle John admonishes believers "to look to themselves that they lose not those things which they have wrought, but that they receive a full reward." § It is important, then, to inquire in what sense, and in what respects good works are rewarded by God; and in order to give a full answer to this question, we would remark, negatively, that the reward is not of merit; and positively, that the reward is of grace.

1. The reward of believers is not of merit. This we have already fully demonstrated. There is nothing meritorious in our good works so that they can claim any reward from God. The whole Gospel system proceeds upon the assumption that merit is excluded

* Heb. xi. 6. † Luke vi. 35. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 8.
§ 2 John 8.

from our salvation,—that our works have no intrinsic value in themselves so as to deserve recompence from God. They are duties which we are bound to perform, and the neglect of which exposes us to punishment; so that, when we have done our utmost,—when we have done all those things which are commanded us,—we are still unprofitable servants, we have only done that which it was our duty to do. Nothing is more clearly demonstrable than that merit gained by the creature from the Creator is an impossibility. The law of God is always binding, and we cannot possibly do more than that law requires; an archangel, no more than a man, can merit any thing from God.

And, besides, it is to be observed that the good works of believers are imperfect, and in strict justice merit punishment rather than reward. Although denominated good works, yet they are not legally so; they do not come up to that perfect standard which the law requires, and cannot endure the severity of God's judgment. Believers are far removed from perfection; they are frequently guilty of sin, and the corrupt nature which, though

mortified, still exists within them, often breaks forth into outward action. Even if we take those works which are good in themselves, which proceed from sanctified affections, and are directed to a proper end, yet there is not one of them that is absolutely perfect in the sight of God. No one ever loved God with all his heart; and this deficiency in the degree of love vitiates every action of the regenerate man; so that the holiest action of the best is defective, and defiled by the adhesion of sin. And hence there is great truth in the remark made by Calvin on this subject: "Let the holy servant of God select from his whole life what he thinks to have been the most excellent in its whole course, and without doubt he would discover, on examination, something which savours of the corruption of the flesh." And thus it happens, that in every thing which the believer does, he comes short of the glory of God.

It must not, however, be supposed that the imperfections which mingle themselves with and defile the works of believers, are similar to the sins of worldly men. They differ from them in many respects. The works of the

unregenerate, for reasons already adverted to, cannot be pleasing and acceptable to God; whereas the good works of believers, though stained with imperfection, are, nevertheless, pleasing in His sight. These imperfections are inseparable from our present imperfect state; and although they demonstrate the impossibility of merit, yet they are mercifully forgiven by a gracious God. There are, in the believer, two principles or dispositions, called in Scripture, the one "the flesh" or the remainder of natural depravity, and the other "the Spirit" or that new nature which is formed within him by the Spirit of God. In the good works of the regenerate, these two principles operate; whatever evil is in them belongs to "the flesh," and whatever good is in them to "the Spirit;" and as "the flesh" in this life is never completely destroyed, so it happens that the good works of the regenerate are never completely perfect. So far as an action proceeds from "the Spirit," it is perfectly good, because it comes from God; but so far as it proceeds from "the flesh," it is mixed with sin, as it comes from our own depraved nature. "That which I do," says

the apostle, "I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. With the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."* And again, he observes, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."† These imperfections, then, which always attend the good works of the regenerate,—these stains of the flesh,—prove that the works, considered simply by themselves, are undeserving of reward, and require the paternal compassion of God.

2. The reward of believers, then, being not of merit, must be of grace. Grace and merit are two opposites, so that if a reward be not of merit it is of grace. "If by grace," says the apostle, "then it is no more of works; but if it be of works, then it is no more

* Rom. vii. 15-18, 25. † Gal. v. 17.

grace."* Now, this reward arises from the liberality, the mercy, and the faithfulness of God. "We attribute," says Bishop Davenant, "this recompence of eternal life as springing from the liberality of God, so decreeing it; to the mercy of God, remitting the daily sins of believers; and, in short, to the faithfulness of God, who confers the remuneration on account of the merits of Christ, rewarding the servants of Christ who are zealous of good works, according to promise, beyond the merit and worthiness of their doings." †

The reward of good works arises from *the liberality of God.* The good works in themselves deserve no reward, but God has been graciously pleased to assign a reward to them; and when God rewards, He does so as a King, —heaping favours upon His servants, recompensing every exertion made in His cause, and overlooking no work performed with a sincere desire for the promotion of His glory. Nor is there any proportion between our services and the reward. He recompenses the wicked only as their sins deserve; but He

* Rom. xi. 6. † Davenant, *Disputatio de Justitia*, translated by Allport; vol. ii., p. 77.

rewards the righteous far beyond their merits. "Cast not away your confidence," says the apostle, "which has great recompence of reward."

Again, the reward of good works arises from *the mercy of God.* The good works of believers are stained with sin, and so require forgiveness; they deserve death, if judged according to the law. But believers are not under the law. Their persons are accepted in Christ, and through Him they are reconciled to God. "He hath made us accepted," says the apostle, "in the Beloved."* And their persons being accepted, so also are their works; they are enabled "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."† The merits of Christ cover all the deficiencies in their obedience; and their actions, sprinkled by that blood which cleanses from sin, are mercifully accepted by God. God is graciously pleased to forgive all that His pure eye sees amiss in them; to pardon the imperfections with which they are stained; and, for the sake of the merits and intercession of His Son, to bestow upon them a gracious reward. Thus it is

* Eph. i. 6. † 1 Pet. ii. 5.

grace which accepts them, and therefore much more is it grace which rewards them.

Farther, the reward of good works arises from *the faithfulness of God.* God has promised to reward the good works of believers; and He is faithful who has promised. "Godliness has the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." Although in point of justice God lies under no obligations to reward the works of His servants, yet in point of faithfulness to His own word He shall reward them. He is not bound by any obligations to His creatures, but His truth and faithfulness are sure grounds whereon to trust. And hence the apostle says: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have showed toward His name."* Every action, then, which is performed in the cause of God; every devout aspiration which has been raised toward heaven; every tear shed for sin; every exercise of holy trust and confidence; every sincere prayer offered up in private; every act of benevolence done from a regard to Christ; even a cup of cold water given in His name to

* Heb. vi. 10.

a thirsty disciple, shall neither be overlooked nor unrewarded by God.

From what has been said, we may learn why it is that we shall be judged according to our works. "Every one," says the apostle, "shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." * "Behold," says the exalted Saviour, "I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." † With the wicked there is no difficulty in the case; they will be judged and punished as their works deserve. With the righteous, it is to be observed that their good works are the evidences of their faith, and it is only by them that it can be known that they are entitled to the reward which is promised to believers. Faith cannot be known by itself, but can only be discerned by its works; and thus, in order to manifest our faith, to prove to the assembled universe our interest in Christ and our title to heaven, to declare the righteousness of God, we must be judged according to our works. Besides, it is to observed, that we are not said to be judged *by*, but *according*

* 2 Cor. v. 10. † Rev. xxii. 12.

to our works. Our only meritorious title to the reward, is the righteousness of Christ; it is for His sake that our persons and our works are accepted. But still there is a reward of grace, and this reward is bestowed according to works. To all believers, the title to heaven is one and the same; heaven is the purchased possession, and the blood of Christ was the price paid for it; but still there are different degrees of happiness there, according to our different attainments in holiness. All will be perfect according to their capacities, but the capacities of one glorified saint will be greater than those of another. Higher powers, nobler faculties, and stronger feelings, will be granted to some than to others. The reward of Paul will be greater than that of one converted on his deathbed. "Some will be saved as with fire," while to others "an entrance will be administered abundantly into the heavenly kingdom." The rewards are all of grace, but this does not prevent that there should be a discrimination in their distribution; and it is probable that this difference will be the natural result of the difference in those religious dispositions and habits which believers have

formed and cultivated in this world. He who is farthest advanced in holiness is best prepared for heaven, and, therefore, will enjoy most of its pleasures.

Thus, then, the reward bestowed by God for good works is a reward not of debt due to the works themselves, but of grace arising from the liberality, mercy, and faithfulness of God. The works themselves are sadly imperfect, but still when we are united unto Christ, both our persons and our works are accepted, and God is pleased, for His sake, to reward them according to the riches of His liberality, the greatness of His mercy, and the faithfulness of His promises.*

* Appendix, Note G.

CHAPTER X.

GRACE THE SOURCE OF JUSTIFICATION.

THERE is one particular still to be considered in order to complete our subject, namely, the consistency and harmony of justification with grace. Although, from what has been said in previous chapters as to the exclusion of works and the mode of the operation of faith, it may at once be inferred that justification is of grace, yet in order to remove some objections, and to correct certain erroneous notions, it appears desirable to devote a separate chapter to this branch of our subject.

The term grace, as in ordinary language, is employed by the sacred writers in a variety of senses. Its primary and usual meaning in Scripture, is the goodness of God toward the undeserving, the unmerited favour of God, the freeness and sovereignty of His love; the same as the word gratis, free favour, for nothing, free of expense. "God," says the

apostle, "hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace,"* that is, the free and unmerited love of God is the source and cause of our salvation. It is also employed to denote the influences of the Holy Spirit, in regenerating and sanctifying the heart of man, and in strengthening the believer to obey the law of God. "My grace is sufficient for thee." † "By the grace of God," that is, by divine influence, "I am what I am."‡ And sometimes it is used to signify the result of the Spirit's work, those virtues which it is His peculiar office to form in the soul. "Grow in grace,"§ that is, Increase in Christian virtue. "As ye abound in everything, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love toward us, see that ye abound in this grace also;" ‖ that is, in this particular virtue, namely, Christian liberality. It is in this last meaning that the term is ordinarily employed by us; hence we speak of the graces of the Christian character, the grace of faith,

* 2 Tim. i. 9. † 2 Cor. xii. 9. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 10.
§ 2 Pet. iii. 18. ‖ 2 Cor. viii. 7.

the grace of love, the grace of patience; but it appears to be seldom used in this sense by the sacred writers. By them it is generally employed to signify the free favour of God. "By grace are ye saved,"* that is, our salvation is entirely owing to the unmerited favour of God.

Our justification is frequently ascribed in the sacred Scriptures to grace as the efficient and moving cause. "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." † "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."‡ "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."§

* Eph. ii. 8.
† Rom. iii. 24.
‡ Eph. ii. 7, 8.
§ Tit. iii. 5-7.

In all these passages grace is opposed to works, and evidently denotes the love and favour of God. Whatever other meanings it may have in Scripture, yet when applied to our justification, it always signifies free favour, and cannot possibly have any other meaning. To suppose that it here denotes the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, or Christian virtue, that is, inherent righteousness, is to render the meaning of the apostle unintelligible. As for example, when he says: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" * If grace here signifies Christian virtue, these words would involve a contradiction in terms: Shall we continue in sin, that holiness may abound? Whereas, if the apostle intends that our justification is entirely gratuitous, such an objection is very likely to arise from the corrupt hearts of men: Shall we continue in sin, that the favour of God may abound?

Grace, that is, sovereign mercy, is that attribute of the Deity which is peculiarly manifested in justification. "It is," we are informed, "of faith, that it might be by grace,"† that the grace of God might be

* Rom. vi. 1. † Rom. iv. 16.

fully manifested and glorified. And again: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."* Although there can be no possible opposition between the attributes of God, yet one of His glorious perfections may shine more brightly in one work or dispensation than in another. His power is seen in the creation of the universe, and His wisdom in the dispensations of His providence; but it is His mercy which shines forth with peculiar lustre in redemption; it is in this great work that He displays, as it were, the treasures of His grace, and manifests to an admiring universe that there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared. Grace is the origin of redemption, and grace its ultimate end; the foundation of God's spiritual temple is laid in grace, and the superstructure is reared in grace, and the whole edifice is designed to be an everlasting monument of the grace of God.

In considering the grace of God, as mani-

* Eph. i. 5, 6.

fested in our justification, we would divide our argument into three parts. *First*, Grace as seen in the nature of justification; *Secondly*, Grace as seen in the ground of justification; and *Thirdly*, Grace as seen in the instrument of justification.

I.—GRACE SEEN IN THE NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION.

It was grace to justify sinners at all. If men could justify themselves by rendering an obedience to the divine law, sufficient for justification; or if they could make an atonement for their offences, either by enduring the penalty of the law, or by rendering some meritorious service; or if God were by any principle of justice obliged to save sinners; then justification would be a matter of right, and there would be no grace in it. "If," says the apostle, "we are justified by works, we have whereof to glory. To him that worketh is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt."* But we have already proved that all these methods are, in the nature of things, impossible. No man can save himself by his

* Rom. iv. 2, 4.

obedience to the law. The obedience which the law demands is perfect; and this no man has, or can possess. Disobedience not only forfeits all claim to reward, but exposes the sinner to punishment. As, then, all men have transgressed, far from being justified, they are condemned by the law. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."*—Nor can man make any atonement for his sins. He cannot possibly do so by suffering the penalty of the law. The sentence which the law pronounces is eternal death; and, therefore, there can never exist a period when the punishment is completed. Nor can he render any meritorious services to God as a compensation for his offences. He cannot possibly do more than the law requires. Even although he should repent of his sins and never again offend against God, yet this would be nothing more than his duty, and would be no atonement for past transgression.—And as man cannot save himself, so neither is God, in point of justice, under any obligation to save him. He might allow justice to take its natural course, and

* Gal. iii. 10.

inflict its sentence. If, then, sinners are to be justified and saved at all, it must be by the free favour and love of God. Salvation is a blessing which they have not merited, and which God is under no obligation to bestow. Grace, and grace alone, can rescue apostate men from the miseries of perdition.

But the greatness of divine grace will more evidently appear, when we reflect on the benefits conferred on the sinner by his being justified. There is pardon,—a full, free, and everlasting pardon. All the sins of the sinner are pardoned, be they ever so numerous, or ever so aggravated. The grace of God is not limited by the heinousness of our offences. "I, even I, am He, that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins." And it is also a free pardon,—bestowed upon the sinner without money and without price, given for nothing—nothing being required, but that by faith he accept the gracious offers of reconciliation. And it is an everlasting pardon; the sins of the justified man shall never more come in remembrance against him,—there is not only the pardon of all past sins, but the virtual

pardon of all future sins,—the continuance of his pardon depends not upon his future obedience but upon the grace of God. Surely here does grace abound,—grace which obliterates all our sins, and faults, and rebellions.—But the sinner is not only pardoned, but also accepted as righteous in the sight of a holy God; not merely are his sins forgiven, and his rebellions overlooked, but he is restored to favour, he is received into the family of God, he is admitted among the number of His children, and constituted an heir of the heavenly inheritance. It were great grace in an earthly sovereign to pardon a rebel; but greater grace not merely to pardon, but also to restore to favour. Nay, the grace of God is greater still; not merely does He restore us to all the privileges and advantages which Adam possessed before he fell; but He confers upon us still greater privileges, and more precious benefits. He not only deals with us as if we had never sinned; but as if we had actually fulfilled the law, as if we had successfully completed our course of probation. Thus the grace of God triumphs over all the artifices of Satan, brings good out of evil, a blessing

from the curse, and converts even the fall of man into the means of his exaltation, by raising him to a higher dignity and glory than he possessed in the earthly paradise. "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."*

The grace of God in our justification also appears when we consider the character of the sinner at the time when he is justified. If the sinner had by good works or inherent righteousness qualified himself for justification; if God justified him when he was righteous, as the Romanists assert, the grace of God would not have so clearly appeared. But the Scripture tells us that it is when men are in a state of ungodliness and sin that God justifies them. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."† There is no course of preparation necessary before we come to the Saviour, no good works to be performed

* Rom. v. 20, 21. † Rom. iv. 5.

before we believe on Him for acceptance with God. It is the ungodly—he that worketh not—that is the subject of justifying grace. Faith is all that is required; and even this condition manifests the grace of God. Justification, then, is an act of grace alone; here grace is all and in all; all works, and merits, and righteousness of our own are entirely excluded; nothing but free and unmerited grace appears.

II.—GRACE SEEN IN THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.

As grace is seen in the nature of our justification—in the pardon of our sins and the acceptance of our persons as righteous; so it is also seen in the ground or meritorious cause of our justification, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

The grace of God is seen in providing and accepting the atonement of Christ on the ground of which we are justified. If the sinner himself could provide an atonement, and if the law of God would admit of such an atonement, his justification would be a matter of right and not of grace. But this is impossible to be done. No man can suffer in the room of

another, because all that he can do is to suffer for his own sins: the law has a previous hold on him; he himself is bankrupt; there is a debt charged to his own account; and until that debt is paid, it is evident that his being surety for another is entirely out of the question. Any sufferings which he may endure are already merited on account of his own sins. "No man can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him." Besides, even if an atonement could be provided, if the sinner could procure for himself a substitute, yet justice requires not that it should be accepted. It is evident that in strict justice every person must suffer for his own crimes: and therefore before a substitute could be obtained the consent of the law must first be granted. It is for God alone to determine what atonement is necessary for answering the demands of justice and vindicating the authority of the law; it is for Him to declare what equivalent He will accept for the sins of transgressors. Hence, then, the grace of God is seen in providing and accepting the atonement. It was God's own providing; neither man nor angel could atone for sin; the utmost they could do was to

obey for themselves. And it was of God's own accepting, because He is the supreme Lawgiver and Ruler of the universe. And what infinite grace in God was it when He perceived, in His inscrutable wisdom, that the atonement necessary to satisfy the demands of His law and to vindicate His justice was the death of His well-beloved Son,—that before the sinner could be justified, His own Son must take upon himself human nature, render obedience to the law and endure its penalty—yet notwithstanding the greatness and value of the sacrifice, to spare Him not, but freely to deliver Him up to the death for us all! Nowhere does the mercy and grace of God shine forth more brightly than in the cross of Christ—in that wonderful expedient which He has contrived for the recovery of fallen and apostate man. Grace triumphs not at the expence of justice, but in rendering satisfaction to its demands, in reconciling the claims of infinite mercy and infinite justice. "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the

remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." *

Notwithstanding the atonement of Christ, or rather by reason of this atonement, the forgiveness of sins is entirely a matter of free favour. On this there is much misapprehension. Christ, it is often asserted, having suffered for our sins, our forgiveness is a matter of justice on the part of God rather than of favour; our debts being paid, God is obliged, in justice, to forgive us our sins. But such a notion is as erroneous as it is subversive of the grace of God. If our sins were strictly analogous to debts, the argument might hold good; for when once the debt is paid, the creditor is bound, in justice, to release the debtor. But, as formerly remarked, our sins are only figuratively called debts; they are in reality crimes, transgressions of the law of God, and as such merit punishment; they required not merely to be remitted, but to be expiated. It was then entirely owing to the grace of God that

* Rom. iii. 24-26.

He provided and accepted an atonement for sins; He was not in justice bound to accept any; He might have exacted the punishment from the offender himself, and none would have any right to complain. Forgiveness, then, is an act of grace alone; the atonement of Christ did not make it a matter of justice, but only removed these obstacles which prevented the free exercise of mercy.

From all this, it is evident that the atonement of Christ is the effect of the grace of God. This is an important article of our faith, on which very erroneous notions prevail among Christians. Some suppose that the atonement of Christ, instead of being the effect, was the cause of God's love. God the Father is too frequently regarded as a Being less benevolent than God the Son; and that it was only by the interposition and death of His Son, that He was prevailed upon to extend forgiveness to sinners. Hence arise all those false notions of God, as if He were devoid of mercy, clothed with terrors, and destitute of compassion. But how dishonourable are these notions of God, how contrary are they to what the Scripture teaches us. It was God's infinite love to sin-

ners that was the cause of the atonement; His mercy, instead of being excited by the death of Christ, was the very reason which induced Him to provide the remedy; and far from being rendered more willing to forgive, it was His previous desire to extend forgiveness to sinners that induced Him to spare not for our sakes His well-beloved Son. The atonement of Christ was not the cause of the grace of God, but the effect; not the fountain, but the stream; not the producer, but the product; not the parent, but the child. Salvation takes its rise from the love of God; this is its cause, its origin, its fountain. It was because He loved sinners, and was unwilling that they should perish, that He sent His Son to die for them, in order that an atonement being made for their sins, His mercy might be extended to them in consistency with the claims of His eternal justice. Christ, then, is the gift of the Father's love, the greatest, the brightest, and the most glorious manifestation of His grace. The Scriptures uniformly represent Christ as the gift of God, and mention this as the most wonderful display of His love. "God," says our Saviour himself, "so loved the world that

He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* "Scarcely for a righteous man," says St. Paul, "will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." † And again, "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." ‡ "In this," says St John, "was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." § Never let us entertain such low and dishonourable thoughts of the ever blessed God, as to suppose that it was the atonement of Christ which rendered Him merciful. It was His love, and His love alone, that caused Him to send His Son into the world; and how great must that

* John iii. 16.
† Rom. v. 7, 8.
‡ Rom. viii. 32.
§ 1 John iv. 9, 10, 14.

love have been which constrained Him to resign His only begotten and well-beloved Son!

"Justification on the ground of atonement," says an eminent writer, "instead of being inconsistent with grace, is its glory and triumph. If the atonement were intended to *make* God merciful, instead of only *making way for Him to appear so*, in a manner consistent with the principles of moral government; if, instead of being the contrivance, fruit, and expression of the Father's infinite love, it were to be exclusively ascribed to the interposition of the Son, by which divine anger was transformed into pity, and the flames of vengeance were quenched in the blood of His cross, we could not speak of being justified freely through the grace of God. But when the whole emanated from the benevolence of God the Father; and when, in His pity for the apostate race of Adam, He determined to give up the Son who had been in His bosom from eternity, that He might justify the ungodly through His righteousness, and thus be at once the just God and the Saviour; this is grace, the

wonders of which will fill immensity with its glory, and eternity with its praise."*

III.—GRACE SEEN IN THE INSTRUMENT OF JUSTIFICATION.

Grace pervades the whole doctrine of justification; it is seen not merely in its nature and in its ground, but also in the manner in which the blessing becomes ours. Faith, the instrument by which we are justified, proves it to be of grace. "It is of faith," says the apostle, "that it might be by grace."† We have already adverted to this, in assigning the reasons why our justification is ascribed to faith; and it is unnecessary to repeat the remarks then made. Be it observed that faith is entirely receptive; it gives nothing, but receives everything. But the very notion of receiving, implies grace,—it presupposes a gift on the part of God. The blessings of the Gospel are entirely the free gifts of God; and faith is the hand by which we receive them. Faith also is a self-renouncing principle; it implies entire self-abnegation; its essence consists in renouncing all works and

* James' Pastoral Addresses, p. 319. † Rom. iv. 16.

merits of our own; it presents nothing of which a person who believes can boast; it has no intrinsic merit in itself, independent of its object; its whole value and efficacy arise not from its own nature, but from that righteousness of Christ which it receives, and which alone justifies the sinner in the sight of God. It thus leaves the doctrine of free grace in all its purity, and excludes all personal boasting and glory in the matter of justification.

But even the very appearance of merit on our part, is entirely excluded, when we consider that faith itself—that receptive, self-renouncing principle, is the gift of God's grace. We are expressly informed that faith is not of ourselves but is the gift of God,* that it is one of the fruits of the Spirit,† and that it is given us to believe in Christ.‡ It is God's grace, then, which enables us to believe, and inclines us to accept of that righteousness whereby we are justified. The Holy Spirit works faith within us, by enlightening our minds so that we may understand the Gospel, by exciting our attention so that we may

* Eph. ii. 8. † Gal. v. 22. ‡ Phil. i. 29.

direct our thoughts to it, by removing our prejudices so that we may embrace it, and by impressing us with a deep sense of its importance so that we may be influenced by it. We are so depraved, our nature is so weak, our will is so perverted, our understanding is so blinded, present objects exert so strong an influence over us, and future objects appear so vague and distant, that without the influences of the Spirit, and grace of God, we would never betake ourselves to the Saviour. The same enmity which induced the Jews to persecute and crucify Christ, resides in the human heart; the same evil motives which actuated them, too frequently actuate us; the same spirit is inherent in fallen humanity. We severely blame them for their conduct; but we also imitate their example; with equal obstinacy, we reject the Saviour. Nothing but divine influences can conquer the prejudices and enmity of the natural man to God. We see this truth exemplified every day; we may call in question the doctrine of divine influences: we may perplex ourselves with the metaphysical difficulties which attend it; yet our own experience—the failure of

our efforts, the breaking of our resolutions, our disinclination to prayer, and the secret enmity of our hearts to God, attest its truth and its necessity. There must be the infusion of a new life from God—the implanting of a new nature—the bestowal of a new heart—in short, a spiritual creation within the soul—a change by no means too strongly represented by the expression, "*being born again*,"—before a man can believe in Christ for justification. Every saint in heaven, and every saint on his way thither, owes his salvation, from first to last, to grace, and to grace only.

It becomes us, then, gratefully to acknowledge, and humbly to adore the grace of God in our justification. The apostle with the greatest propriety speaks of its "exceeding riches."* There was nothing in us to excite the love of God, but everything to call forth His righteous displeasure. And yet, if believers, how has His grace abounded toward us! By grace He provided and accepted an atonement for our sins. By grace He sent His Son to die for us. By grace He has cast our lot in a Christian land, and revealed

* Eph. ii. 7.

to us His glorious Gospel. By grace He has enabled us to come to the Saviour, and to commit our souls to His care. By grace He has justified us, not imputing to us our innumerable and aggravated offences. By grace He has accepted us in the Beloved, adopted us into His own family, and bestowed upon us all the privileges of His sons. By grace He has subdued our corrupt passions, and implanted within us at least a desire for holiness. By grace He has enabled us to continue in the faith even to this day, notwithstanding the waywardness of our hearts. And by grace He will yet glorify us, and admit us into the company of the prophets, and apostles, and spirits of the just made perfect, whom by grace He has saved. "O to grace, how great a debtor!" How unmerited are the favours of God! How undeserving are we of the least of these benefits! "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgive-

ness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Grace being the source and origin of justification, renders those inexcusable who reject this method of salvation. Justification being a benefit of such infinite importance—a deliverance from the greatest evils, and a restoration to the favour and paternal love of God—to neglect to seek it would be inexcusable, even although it cost much labour and trouble to obtain it; how much more inexcusable must it be when it is of grace? All that is required of us is to accept the gracious offers of salvation, to rely upon the righteousness of Christ, and to receive forgiveness as the free gift of God; the blessings of the Gospel are freely offered, without money and without price. And yet this is the very reason why these blessings are so much slighted and neglected. Man is so proud that he does not wish to be entirely indebted to God for his salvation; he would fain work out a righteousness of his own, and mix up his own merits with those of Christ. Were some hard thing demanded of him,—were it required that he should make long pilgrimages, submit to

great sacrifices, endure bodily sufferings, he might have done it. But when the Scripture says, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved," his proud and depraved heart revolts at so simple a remedy. And especially, when the salvation which the Gospel offers is a salvation from sin; a deliverance from the power of his passions and corrupt inclinations, the implantation and growth of holiness within his soul,—this increases his aversion to it. He loves his sins; he would part with anything rather than with them; they are a part of himself, they are a second nature to him; and thus, like the pretended disciples of Christ, he exclaims: "This is a hard saying, who can bear it." But be it so: still salvation is essential; we must be saved, or else we perish, and we can only be saved in God's way. Let us, then, give up our foolish prejudices; let us beware of receiving the grace of God in vain, and of neglecting the great salvation; at present it is the day of grace, and we may be saved by grace; but let us never forget that the day of grace has its limits, and if we trifle beyond these limits, that day will close in the darkness of night.

But whilst this view of the subject teaches us that those are inexcusable who neglect salvation, it, at the same time, affords the greatest encouragement to convinced and penitent sinners. If our justification depended in any degree upon ourselves; if it were given as the reward of our sincere, though imperfect obedience; or even if it were bestowed on the improvement of grace already received; we might well despair. Our hearts are so deceitful; our obedience is often so very insincere: our devotion is so formal; our defections are so numerous; that we might with good reason exclaim: "Who then can be saved?" But justification is not of works, but of grace; it depends not on our imperfect obedience, but on the perfect righteousness of Christ; it arises not from the improvement we make, but from the faithfulness of God's promises. The answer of the Gospel to the inquiring sinner is: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and the same reply is applicable to the Christian in every stage of his progress. Here, then, is encouragement to the most desponding; here there is a full and all-

sufficient warrant for every sinner to come to the Saviour. Christ will not break the bruised reed, nor despise the day of small things. If we only believe, the grace of God will surmount every obstacle which obstructs our salvation. Our sins may be very numerous and aggravated; but the grace of God can forgive them all. Our hearts may be very treacherous and inconstant; but God giveth more grace. Our prayers may be very cold and formal: but God will pour upon us the Spirit of grace. Oh! if we could but know the exceeding riches of the grace of God—if we could but realise it in all its length and height—reaching, as it does, from eternity to eternity—rising far above the multitude of our sins—embracing in its sacred influence sinners of all kinds—pardoning sins of every description, and of every degree—justifying the ungodly—transforming the most depraved of men into redeemed saints, Manasseh into a penitent, Saul of Tarsus into an apostle, and the thief on the cross into an everlasting monument of grace—we would despair no more, we would be weak no more—but, strengthened by the mighty power of God,

we would feel that His grace was sufficient for us.

We have had, in the course of this work, frequent occasion to caution the reader against abusing the grace of God. The doctrine of justification by faith without works, and whatever doctrines concern the grace of God, are liable to be abused by an ungodly world. St. Jude speaks of those who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many who think, or at least seem to think, that they will be justified by grace, however worldly their lives may be. But such men, as we have said before, and again repeat, are not, and cannot be saved. Holiness is essentially necessary to salvation, because it is an inseparable part of it, and an indispensable preparation for heaven. Grace is displayed in our sanctification as well as in our justification. And how inconceivably great is the sin of those who thus abuse the grace of God—who draw encouragement to sin from the very mercy of God—who make this doctrine an excuse for ungodliness—who pervert the Gospel of the grace of God into the

vilest of uses! Woe to the man by whom this offence cometh! It had been better for him that he had never been born, than that he should so greatly dishonour and blaspheme God, by making His grace an inducement to sin.

As we have already had frequent occasion to observe, the doctrine of justification by grace, when rightly considered and really embraced, will have a directly opposite effect. Instead of being an encouragement to sin, it will be an encouragement to holy living, and to the practice of every Christian virtue. "The grace of God," says the apostle, "that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." * Let us, then, see to it, that this is the result of divine grace upon us; that the love of God in our redemption has the effect of causing us to live a more godly life; that we give no occasion to the adversaries of grace to call in question its purifying tendency, but that we stop their mouths by a blameless life; and

* Tit. ii. 11, 12.

that we prove to the world the reality of that faith which we profess, by its producing the fruits of righteousness, inspiring us with the most fervent love to our fellow-men, elevating our affections to things above, imparting the savour of holiness to all that we do, sanctifying our worldly duties, and removing us at the greatest distance from all iniquity.

We have thus concluded our explanation of the great Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. It should never for a moment be thought that this is only a theoretical dogma, —one of those speculative points in theology which have no practical bearing upon our conduct,—a doctrine which concerns ministers but not the people to understand. If there is a doctrine of more importance than any other to our spiritual welfare and happiness, it is this of justification,—a doctrine which explains to us the Gospel method of salvation, and answers the inquiry of the awakened sinner. Nor must we believe the truths and doctrines of Christianity merely because the church to which we belong believes and teaches them. This is nothing else than the implicit faith of the

Romanists, which in reality is not faith, but virtual unbelief. The time, we trust, is fast passing away, when men attach their faith to the opinions of others. Each man must think for himself; he must exercise his own judgment; he must search the Scriptures and judge for himself what is written therein; he must make a proper use of that right which every Protestant possesses, the right of private judgment. Our faith must not stand on the wisdom of man, but on our own convictions,—on our prayerful study of the Word of God. Thus only can it be real and genuine; thus at least only can it withstand the attacks to which it is continually exposed in this sifting age. We must call no man master upon earth, for One is our Master, even Christ.

We have often had occasion in this treatise to observe that the merits of Christ are the only true foundation on which to build our hopes for eternity; but we cannot conclude without again impressing upon the reader the absolute necessity of securing an interest in these merits. This is the all-important matter; this is the one thing needful. As

Christ is the only way of salvation, it is absolutely necessary to inquire, whether we have entered upon that way. If there were other ways of salvation, this necessity would not be so pressing; we might adopt one or other of them and be saved. But if there is only one way, there is no room for choice, no liberty for selection. Apart from Christ there is no salvation. Let us, then, trust in Him alone, and venture the salvation of our souls on Christ and on Christ only. "I know," says St. Paul, "in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He will keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." In Christ only there is safety; out of Christ there is only danger.

To conclude in a few words. The subject which has been discussed in this treatise is of supreme importance; it is intimately connected with the brightest hopes and the future destiny of man. It is the way of the sinner's acceptance with God,—the application of the great atonement of Christ,—an essential part of the Gospel system. It is glad tidings to the awakened sinner,—the rest to the weary and heavy laden,—the comfort to the sorrowful,—

the refuge of the afflicted,—the cause of joy and peace and hope to the believer,—and the answer to the all-important question, "What must I do to be saved?" May God grant that this work may be the means of imparting to the reader clearer views of divine truth, of removing whatever difficulties and obscurities attend his conception of it, of causing him to renounce all dependence on his own righteousness, and of leading him to that Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.—ON THE NATURE OF SIN. PAGE 22.

Inadequate notions of the nature of sin lie at the root of all those errors which prevail concerning the nature of the Gospel remedy. It is a true remark of an old divine, that if we do not understand the law we cannot understand the Gospel. "Sin," says the apostle John, "is the transgression of the law."* This is its essential nature, and this circumstance ought not to be overlooked in our reasonings upon it. We must raise our views to God as the Lawgiver and moral Ruler of all His intelligent and morally accountable creatures. We must fix our attention on those moral attributes of His nature,—His righteousness, His justice, and His truth,—which constitute Him a Lawgiver, and on those moral qualities in us which constitute us the subjects of law. Our sins are not merely evils, most pernicious in their nature, most hateful in their character, but transgressions of the law of God, crimes which affect the welfare of the universe at large. It is not merely that such and such particular individuals suffer by them; it is the law of God which is broken; it is the happiness of the intelligent universe which is invaded.

From this arises the necessity of an atonement for sin.

* 1 John iii. 4.

It is founded on a sense of the criminality of sin; it is a satisfaction rendered to divine justice, without which, we are informed in Scripture, mercy could not be extended toward the guilty, "that God might be just, and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus."* Thus was God's hatred of sin declared to the whole universe by the death of Christ, and that in a more striking and forcible manner than it could have been by the punishment of transgressors themselves. On any other view of sin, as far as we see, an atonement would not only be unnecessary, but, from the nature of the case, an impossibility.

The particular erroneous view of sin, as being only an inherent quality in the soul which renders us displeasing to God and unfits us for the enjoyment of His presence, is that error which, we think, pervades and moulds the theological system promulgated by Mr. Maurice. It is the old error of the Socinians; but it has been adorned by all the charms of a persuasive eloquence, and defended by the reasonings of a powerful and earnest mind. We reverence the talents of the writer, and especially that spirit of earnestness which pervades all his works; but for these very reasons we dread the influence of those errors which he has inculcated. In his essay upon sin,—in a literary point of view one of the finest of his "Theological essays,"—the notion of it, as the transgression of the law, is kept out of view; the justice of God, which renders its punishment necessary, is overlooked, or at least placed in the back-ground; sin is merely viewed as some terrible disease which has infected humanity, which cleaves to the man himself, and which, therefore, requires to be cured, but not to be expiated. Consistently enough with this view of sin, Mr. Maurice explains away the doctrine of the atonement by the vicarious sufferings of Christ, and his views are somewhat similar to those of the Socinians, that the whole sacrifice of the Redeemer consists in His submission to the will of God.

* Rom. iii. 26.

Note B.—ON THE TERM JUSTIFICATION. Page 55.

The Romanists and Protestants differ as to the meaning of the term justification. According to the Romanists, it is equivalent to the word sanctification, and signifies a making just or righteous; whereas, the Protestants regard it as a purely forensic term, meaning a declaration of righteousness. We have, we trust, sufficiently demonstrated that the latter is the true sense of the term in Scripture. The Greek verb, δικαιοω, translated justify, is entirely a legal term, and is never by any good author employed in the sense of making just. It signifies to declare just or right, to acquit; and sometimes to pronounce sentence, to condemn; the sense, however, being always forensic. What appears to have led to the confusion of ideas is the Latin term *justificatio*, from which our English word justification is derived, which, like other kindred terms, sanctification, mortification, and the like, would appear to signify a *making* rather than a *declaring*. The Romans had no word in their language analogous to the Greek term, and hence one had to be formed for that purpose. Led astray by the apparent meaning of the term in their language, many of the Latin fathers used *justificatio* in the sense of sanctification, or making just; whereas the Greek fathers, not being liable to the same mistake, employed the term in its true Scriptural sense.

Note C.—ON CHRIST'S ACTIVE AND PASSIVE OBEDIENCE. Page 73.

A very common distinction is made by some divines between the active and passive obedience of Christ. By His active obedience, they mean the actions of His holy life, and His perfect fulfilment of the law of God; and by His passive obedience, the sufferings of His meritorious death, and the full satisfaction which He made for transgression. Now, although there is an obvious difference between act-

ing and suffering, yet the above distinction does not seem to be recognised either in Scripture or in the life of our Saviour. On the one hand, His active obedience was eminently passive. "He learned obedience," says the apostle, "by the things that He suffered."* And on the other hand, His passive obedience was eminently active; for His life was not taken from Him, but He laid it down of himself. In all that He did and suffered, passion and action were conjoined; He was ever the man of sorrows, and was always engaged in His Father's work. "Christ," says St. Bernard, "had passive action in His life, and active passion in His death."

Note D.—THE DOCTRINE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH. Page 95.

It has been often objected that the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith, in the imputed righteousness of Christ, is a novelty unheard of in the Christian church before the time of Luther, and in particular that it is opposed to the doctrine of the Primitive church. The fathers, it is asserted, taught the doctrine of justification by the infusion of inherent righteousness, and especially Augustine, the most distinguished of them all, repeatedly asserts that we are justified by being made holy. "The doctrine of the continental Protestants," writes Dr. Newman, "is extravagant, because the fathers interpret Scripture otherwise." And again: "It is a new gospel, unless three hundred years stand for eighteen hundred."† This objection has been met and fully answered by many writers, especially by Bishop Davenant in his "Disputatio de Justitia," and in our own times by Faber, in his "Primitive Doctrine of Justification."

We have had occasion to remark, in a former note, that there was no term in the Latin language corresponding to

* Heb. v. 8. † Newman's Lectures on Justification, p. 65, 61.

the Greek word for justification; and that by the use of the term *justificatio*, the Latin fathers were led into the error of conceiving it to mean a making just or righteous, rather than a declaration of righteousness. Hence it is that Augustine, perhaps the most theological among the fathers, generally uses the term as of similar import with sanctification; but still he never taught that we are forgiven and accepted by God by virtue of our own inherent righteousness; nor is there any of the fathers more opposed to the merit of good works, as he was necessarily led to be in his controversies with the Pelagians.

But even allowing that the fathers were opposed to us on this question, yet what of that, if we can prove that our doctrine is derived from the Word of God. The testimony of the fathers is of the greatest use to us in ascertaining the reality of important facts connected with Christianity; but we suspect that their authority is greatly over-estimated as teachers of theology. Indeed, we think that our own divines, with all the helps and appliances which modern learning and research afford, are much more capable judges, and much safer guides than the fathers, who possessed neither their learning nor their advantages; and, to own the truth, we would far rather trust to the opinions of Calvin, Luther, Davenant, and Owen on "Justification," than to those of Irenæus, Justin, Cyprian, or even Augustine. In short, we consider the fathers rather as historians than as teachers of doctrine or interpreters of Scripture. And hence the greatest number of quotations from the fathers to prove the opposite, would not shake our confidence in a doctrine which we have strong reasons for believing to be contained in the Word of God.

But that we have no reason to shrink from an examination of the doctrine of the Primitive church, we add a few quotations from the fathers, out of many more which might be given, and which prove sufficiently that the Protestant doctrine of justification is at least no novelty in the Christian church.

Justin Martyr in his "Epistle to Diognetus," or whoever was the author of this Epistle,* writes thus: "He gave His Son a ransom for us; the holy for transgressors, the innocent for the wicked, the just for the unjust, the incorruptible for the mortal. For what else could cover our sins but His righteousness? In whom could we, wicked and ungodly, be justified but in the Son of God alone? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable work! O unexpected benefits! that the iniquity of many should be hid in the righteous One, and the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors." Athanasius, in his work on "The Incarnation of the Word of God," writes: "Christ has brought into the world a righteousness free from all sin, by becoming partakers of which, we shall live and be saved." And Chrysostom, discoursing on 2 Cor. v. 21, says: "What word is this? What mind is able to comprehend it? for He saith, He made the righteous One a sinner that He might make sinners righteous. Nay, He does not say this, but what is much more: for He lays not down the affection, but the very quality itself. For He says not He made Him a sinner, but sin; not that He did not sin only, but that He knew no sin; that we also might be made, He says not righteous, but righteousness and the righteousness of God. For this is of God when we are justified not of works; for if so, not one stain must be found in them, but by grace whereby all sin is blotted out."

Note E.—Romish Doctrine of Justification. Page 105.

It is to be observed that the Romanists do not consider justification to be a forensic act at all; according to them, it is a *making* not a *declaring* righteous. Justification, they affirm, consists in the infusion of grace or righteousness

* Neander, whilst he praises this Epistle as being one of the finest remains of Christian antiquity, yet does not think that Justin Martyr was its author.

into the soul, and is afterwards preserved and increased by good works and acts of obedience; it consists in the renewing of the Holy Spirit and in inherent righteousness. The merits of Christ are only in this sense imputed or communicated to believers, that it is through His mediation that grace is procured or purchased to sanctify their natures; so that His righteousness is only the remote cause of their justification, whereas their own righteousness is the immediate and formal cause thereof. Thus, in the canons of the Council of Trent, we have the following declaration: "If any one shall say that men are justified either by the imputation of Christ's righteousness alone, or only by the remission of sins, to the exclusion of grace and charity, which is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and which is inherent in them; or that the grace by which we are justified is the favour of God alone; let him be accursed."

Farther, the Romanists hold that our sins are only so far forgiven, on account of the satisfaction of Christ, as to deliver from eternal punishment; but that they are, moreover, punished and expiated by the endurance of penances in this life, and by the pains of purgatory in the next. Thus the Council of Trent decrees: "Whoever shall affirm, that when the grace of justification is received, the offence of the penitent sinner is so forgiven, and the sentence of eternal punishment reversed, that there remains no temporal punishment to be endured, before his entrance into the kingdom of heaven, either in this world, or in the future state in purgatory; let him be accursed."

According to this view of the subject, it follows that in the Romish system there is nothing whatever resembling the Protestant doctrine of justification. Justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ is not only by them corrupted, but entirely explained away; the name is left without any substance or reality. There is in their system something resembling our doctrine of sanctification, though the resemblance even there is obscure; but as to our doc-

trine of justification there is nothing whatever corresponding with it.

It is, however, with pleasure we remark, that before the Council of Trent, when justification by inherent righteousness was confirmed, there were several eminent Romish writers who held views of justification precisely similar to those of the Protestants. There were many, at the time of the Reformation, who, although they did not secede from the Romish church, yet coincided in doctrine with the Reformers. Albert Pighius writes very distinctly on the subject. "In Christ," says he, "we are justified before God, not in ourselves, not by our own, but by His righteousness, which is imputed to us, communicating with Him. Wanting righteousness of our own, we are taught to seek for righteousness without ourselves, in Him." So also Cardinal Contarini says: "If the question be on which of these two kinds of righteousness must we build, the indwelling or that in Christ imputed to us, the answer of the devout must be that we confide only in the latter; that our own righteousness is but inchoate, imperfect, and full of deficiencies; that Christ's righteousness on the contrary is true, perfect, and in God's sight thoroughly and solely well pleasing; for its sake alone can we trust to be justified before God." Isidore Clarius thus writes: "We say that we are justified neither by faith at first, nor by love, but by the righteousness of God alone, imputed to us in Christ." And Cornelius Mussus says: "No works have any place in justifying a man before God; by faith alone, all men are justified with God, without works, moral, ceremonial, or judicial, of any law whatever, whether of nature, or of Moses, or of the Gospel."

After the Council of Trent, the doctrine of justification by inherent righteousness was stereotyped, and became part of the accredited faith of the Church of Rome. And yet Bellarmine himself, the ablest defender of Romanism, and the great advocate of this doctrine in particular, constrained by the force of truth, asserts: "On account of

the insecurity of our own righteousness and the danger of vain-glory, it is the safest way to repose our trust on the mercy and kindness of God;" and he closes his discourse with the following syllogism: "Either a man hath true merits or he hath not. If he hath not, he is perniciously deceiving himself, trusting in false merits; if he hath them, he loses nothing whilst he looks not to them, but trusts in God alone. So that whether a man hath any good works or no, as to his justification before God, it is best and safest for him not to have any regard unto them, or put any trust in them."

Since the above was written, we have read with much satisfaction the life of Martin Boos, a Roman Catholic clergyman in Bavaria and Austria in the early part of this century. He is said to be a type of a body of Romish clergymen in these countries, who, like Contarini and his associates at the time of the Reformation, hold Protestant views of doctrine although continuing in the Church of Rome. We would fain hope that such a body is a large one, and that the pure light of Gospel truth still shines amidst the darkness of Popery. The views of Boos concerning justification are clear and scriptural. We refer the reader to his biography, as we have no space for extracts. That such views were repudiated by the Church of Rome is evident from the severe persecutions to which Boos was exposed throughout the whole of his ministry, and that chiefly because he preached the doctrine of justification by faith. Several of his converts, both among the clergy and the laity, went further than their teacher, and united themselves to the Protestant Church.

NOTE F.—ON INHERENT RIGHTEOUSNESS. PAGE 108.

We have sufficiently stated in the text the views of Protestants concerning inherent righteousness. We assert its reality, but deny its being the cause of our justification. Inherent righteousness exists in all the justified, and dis-

tinguishes them from the ungodly and unbelieving; it is the consequence of justification, and the effect of that grace which is infused into the heart of all believers. God reckons it to believers for what it is, that is an imperfect righteousness,—not for what it is not, a perfect righteousness sufficient to answer the demands of the law. On account of it believers are declared just, not absolutely but imperfectly: it is our sanctification, but not our justification.

Hence it appears how unfounded is that calumny, which was first broached by Bellarmine, that not one of the Protestant writers, except Bucer and Chemnitz, acknowledges any inherent righteousness at all in the justified; whereas its reality is directly asserted,—only its use and necessity as to justification are denied. It would seem that the same calumny is advanced in our days by Dr. Newman, at least his reasoning proceeds on the assumption that inherent righteousness is denied by those who maintain the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ; and hence all those arguments and scriptural passages which he brings forward in proof of the necessity of inherent righteousness, are nothing to the purpose, for this we assert as well as he; nor do these passages, nor any one of them, teach that this righteousness is the ground or meritorious condition of our acceptance with God. And hence also the contrast, which he draws at great length, between the systems of Luther and Augustine, as if the one inculcated imputed righteousness only and the other inherent righteousness only, is evidently fallacious; inasmuch as both taught the same doctrine, and inculcated both kinds of righteousness in their proper places,—the one the meritorious cause of our justification, and the other of our holiness.*

Indeed, the arguments which Dr. Newman brings forward to prove that our inherent righteousness is the ground of

* Newman's Lectures on Justification, pp. 62-64.

our justification before God, appear to us very strange and irrelevant. We cannot see what possible inference on this subject can be drawn from the correspondence between the giving of the law from Sinai and the coming of the Spirit both happening on the day of Pentecost, on which he lays so much stress.* To affirm that when St. Paul says, that "he desires to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," he means by "his own righteousness" his legal righteousness, and by "the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ" his evangelical righteousness, is evidently erroneous; for what is evangelical righteousness but righteousness in conformity with the law? † And to mention only one other of his arguments, which he lays down in a syllogistic form. Justification is a state in which we are pleasing God; but the regenerate please God not merely by the imputation of Christ's obedience, but by their own obedience: by their own obedience, therefore, are they justified.‡ Whereas the legitimate conclusion should be, by their own obedience, therefore they manifest that they are in a justified state; though the reasoning is throughout defective, arguing from a particular assumption as if it were universal.

But Dr. Newman accuses us of using the word righteousness in two discordant senses, when we apply it to the imputed righteousness of Christ and to our own righteousness. On the contrary, we use the word in the same sense, namely, conformity to God's law, only we affirm, what he himself must also allow, that in the case of Christ the righteousness is perfect, whereas, in our case, it is imperfect.

We do not allude to the peculiar doctrine which Dr. Newman has advanced in his lectures,—that justification consists in the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost,

* Newman's Lectures, page 49. † Page 53. ‡ Page 57, 58.

because this appears to be merely another way of expressing the Romish doctrine. We have heard, though we do not avouch for its truth, that since he seceded to the Church of Rome he has repudiated his book; but all that was necessary was merely to alter a few expressions, to obliterate a few unintelligible distinctions, and to remove a few inconsistencies, and it would at once be transformed into no weak defence of the Romish doctrine of justification.

Note G.—ON THE TERM REWARD. Page 303.

It is evident that in Scripture the blessings of a future state are spoken of as rewards assigned to the good works of believers. This, we think, cannot be disputed, but must by all candid inquirers after truth be admitted. "Great is your reward in heaven,"* says our Saviour. "Every man," says St. Paul, "shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."† "Let no man beguile you of your reward."‡ "Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance."§ "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."‖ "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day."¶ "Look to yourselves," says St. John, "that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."** The great point of debate, then, is not whether the good works of believers are rewarded, but in what sense the term reward is here used, and how we can reconcile the reward of good works with the doctrine of free justification through the righteousness of Christ.

* Mat. v. 12. † 1 Cor. iii. 8. ‡ Col. ii. 18.
§ Col. iii. 24. ‖ 1 Tim. iv. 8. ¶ 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.
** 2 John 8.

One thing is evident, that in whatever sense, heaven is the reward of the good works of believers, it cannot possibly be the meritorious reward. Our works are imperfect and sinful, and there is an infinite disproportion between them and the reward of eternal life. Our only title to heaven is the righteousness of Christ. "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son." To all believers, then, the title is one and the same; heaven is the purchased possession, and the blood of Christ was the price paid for it.

1. The blessings of heaven may be said to be the reward of good works, because they are attached to that faith of which good works are the fruits and evidences. It must be remembered that the benefits of Christ's obedience and death are restricted only to believers; none have any interest in His merits except those who are united to Him by faith. Faith, then, is the condition on our part to be performed, and, therefore, it may with propriety be said, that the reward of eternal life is attached to faith, because it is the instrumental cause of obtaining it. "He that believeth shall be saved." For a similar reason, eternal life may be said to be connected with those good works which are the fruits and evidences of faith, inasmuch as they prove the existence of that faith to which the promises of salvation are attached.

2. The blessings of heaven may be said to be the reward of good works, because there is a proportion of distribution between them and the good works of believers. We have had occasion, elsewhere, to observe that there are different degrees of happiness in heaven, and that these are in accordance with the different attainments of believers in holiness, and with the moral value of their works. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to

drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."* In this sense, then, the blessings of heaven may well be represented as rewards assigned to good works. They are rewards of grace bestowed upon God's friends, upon those whose persons and works are accepted in Christ Jesus; and it is in this sense that most of those scriptural passages which speak of the blessings of a future state as the reward of good works, may, without any violence, be interpreted. We are judged and rewarded, not *for* but *according to* our works.

3. The blessings of heaven may be said to be the reward of good works, because they are in a great measure the effects of those holy dispositions which are implanted in the souls of believers. Good works, as we have already proved, are our preparation for heaven; they are a proof that a saving process is going on within us; they are the means by which we are fitted for the enjoyment and service of heaven. Grace in the soul is glory begun on earth. In this sense, then, the blessings of heaven are attached to good works; the former are the fruit of which the latter are the seed. "They that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

"I admit," says Calvin, "that the works of the faithful are rewarded with the promises which God gave in His law to the cultivators of righteousness and holiness; but in this reward we should always attend to the cause which procures favour to works. This cause, then, appears to be threefold. First, God, turning His eye away from the works of His servants which merit reproach more than praise, embraces them in Christ, and, by the intervention of faith alone, reconciles them to himself without the aid of works. Secondly, the works, not being estimated by their worth, He, by His fatherly kindness and indulgence,

* Mat. x. 41, 42.

honours so far as to give them some degree of value. Thirdly, He extends His pardon to them, not imputing the imperfection by which they are all polluted, and would deserve to be regarded as vices rather than virtues.*

* Calvin's Institutes, vol. ii., pp. 395, 396.--Calvin Translation Society.

THE END.

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